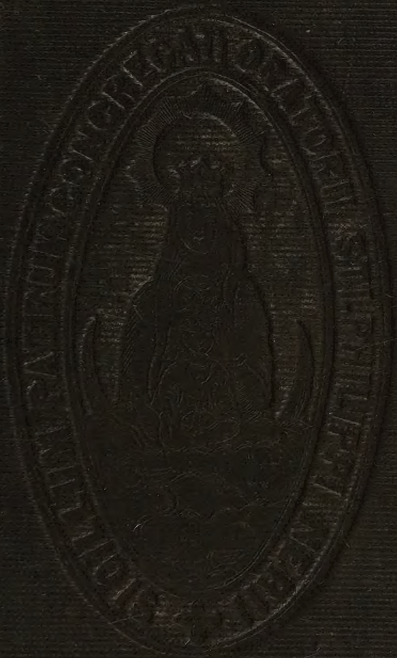


FF. PRÆDICATORUM.
BENITIÆ.
No. 922
J.

MODERN SAINTS

AND

Servants of God.

St. ROSE OF VITERBO.

The Saints and Servants of God.

THE LIVES

OF

S. JANE FRANCES DE CHANTAL,

ST. ROSE OF VITERBO,

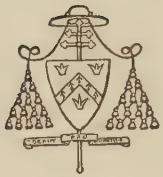
AND

B. MARY OF OIGNIES.

"Gaude Maria Virgo, cunctas hæreses sola interemisti in universo mundo."—*Antiph. Ecclesiæ.*

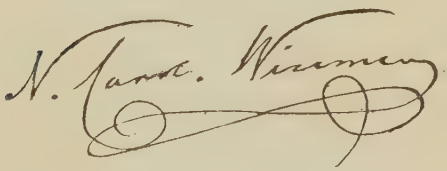
VOL. II.

LONDON:
RICHARDSON AND SON, 172, FLEET STREET;
9, CAPEL STREET, DUBLIN; AND DERBY.
M.DCCC.LII.



We hereby approve and sanction the Series of Lives of the Canonized and Beatified Saints, the Servants of God declared Venerable, and others commonly reputed to have died in the odour of sanctity, now in course of publication by the Congregation of the Oratory of St. Philip Neri, and we cordially recommend it to the Faithful, as calculated to promote the glory of God and of His Saints, the increase of devotion, and the spread of our holy Religion

Given at Westminster, the Feast of the Nativity of our B. Lady, A. D. 1851.



Acc: 4749

TO

THE NUNS OF ENGLAND,

WHO SHIELD THEIR COUNTRY BY THEIR PRAYERS,

AND BY THEIR MEEK AUSTERITIES

MAKE REPARATION FOR ITS SINS;

AND TO

THE SISTERS OF MERCY,

WHOSE CHARITY IS THEIR INCLOSURE,

WHILE FOR THE LOVE OF THEIR HEAVENLY SPOUSE

IN HIS POOR AND SUFFERING MEMBERS

THEY DENY THEMSELVES

THE PEACE AND PROTECTION OF THE CLOISTER.

Daughters of Mary! in retreats obscure,
Lost to man's thought and eye, amid the trees
And unfrequented fields, on bended knees
Sueing for England's pardon, lives so pure
Mingle in heaven and God's approval share
With that uncloistered love, whose willing feet
Are borne through jeering crowd and gazing street
To scenes of lonely want and pining care.
For you the holy past is now unfurled,
That with its bright examples you may feed
The spirit of devotion. While the world
Honours your goodness with its hatred, you,
Still to your high and calm vocation true,
May win fresh light and strength from what you read.

F. W. Faber.

St. Wilfrid's,
Feast of our Lady of Redemption,
M.DCCC.XLVII.

PREFACE.

The translation of the Life of St. Rose of Viterbo was offered to the editors of this series by a friend in Italy; and when it was accepted, the editors believed it to be a translation of the Italian Racconti della Vita, de' Prodigi, e del Culto di Santa Rosa Viterbese, by Bernardino Mencarini. When the MS. arrived, it was found to be taken from another Italian Life, less full upon the cultus of the saint, but with a more pleasing and simple narrative of her life, which the editors were glad to accept in lieu of Mencarini's antiquarian work, notwithstanding the disadvantage of having no original to correct the translation by. The portion published is confined to the biography of the Saint, and comprises only the first and part of the second book of the original. The rest of the work, like Mencarini's, is merely a catalogue of

miracles, and a history of the cultus of the Saint.

The Life of the Blessed Mary of Oignies is translated from the Latin life, in the Bollandists, by a priest in the diocese of Southwark. The author of the Life was the pious Cardinal Jacques de Vitriaco, a canon regular of Vitry, and afterwards bishop of Acon, in Palestine, and from thence translated to the See of Jerusalem. He died at Rome in 1244. The Life was selected for translation in consequence of the very beautiful abridgment of it by Alban Butler (ap. June 23). Butler calls her St. Mary, but Papebroke simply styles her Blessed, though in his history of her cultus, and the three translations of her body, he mentions that she is repeatedly called Saint in Flemish Calendars.

With regard to the enquiries of several kind correspondents, we would inform those whose manuscripts we have in hand that the non-appearance of these lives in the series does not by any means imply that the translations have been rejected for want of fidelity, or any other

cause. Many circumstances, over which the editors themselves have no controul, help in determining the order of publication. Some lives are not long enough for a volume, and lives which would fittingly accompany them are not yet translated; or translations have been received from religious orders on the condition of their speedy publication; or translators abroad have not returned the originals, and so there is a difficulty in seeing certain translations through the press; or there is matter in the life itself which suggests the propriety of further consideration and delay; or there is a strongly expressed wish on the part of several subscribers for particular lives; or certain lives are deferred in order somewhat to vary the series. It is impossible to satisfy all our friends, especially since subscribers wished the issue to be reduced from six to four volumes in the year. Some wish to have more eminent and well-known saints; others ask for lives of servants of God, whose processes are under consideration, as they can find the lives of the great saints elsewhere. We must ask

them all to consider the extent of the undertaking, and not to think we are wantonly disregarding their suggestions, because we cannot always follow them. We give them all consideration, and where we cannot comply with them, we value them as expressions of interest and sympathy.

The editors would feel greatly indebted to any friends who would offer to translate from the Spanish or Portuguese, and to any one who could lend them a copy of Da Ponte's Life of Maria d'Escobar, or find a translator for it.

Some complaint has been made of the thinness of some of the volumes, which were to contain on an average 400 pages. Thirty-three volumes have now come out, including the three volumes of Benedict XIV. on Heroic Virtue, and it will be found that the volumes average 410 pages each, exclusive of the prefatory matter.

Persons who are kind enough to translate lives for the series are requested to communicate with the editors before they commence the translation, as it has hap-

pened in more than one instance that there have been duplicate translations of the same life. And as in one case some progress was made in the translation of a life which had been condemned by the Congregation of the Index, it has been thought well to subjoin a list of those lives which have been thus censured.

LIVES OF THE SAINTS AND OTHER REPUTED HOLY PERSONS PUT ON THE INDEX OF PROHIBITED BOOKS.

1. Bagatta Gio. Bonifazio. Vita della Ven. Orsola Benincasa. *Decr.* 19. *Septemb.* 1679.
2. Baillet Adrien. Les Vies des Saints. Tome 1. *Decr.* 4, *Martii.* 1079.
3. ——— Tome 2, contenant les mois de May, Juin, Juillet et Aoust. *Decr.* 15, *Jan.* 1714.
4. De Brion M. l'abbé. La Vie de la très sublime contemplative Soeur Marie de Sainte Therèse, Carmelite de Bordeaux. *Decr.* 2, *Sept.* 1727.
5. Burlamacchi Nicolao. Vita di D. Armando Giovanni le Bouthillier di Ransé, raccolta da quella, che ha scritta in lingua Francese l'Abbate di Marsollier. *Donec corrigatur. Decr.* 7, *Feb.* 1718.
6. Ciammaricone Filippo. Historia Sagra di S. Veneranda Parasceve Cittadina di Sezza. *Nisi corrigatur epistola ad Academicos Setinos Decr.* 4 *Martii* 1709.
7. Falcone Niccolò Carminio. L'intera Storia della famiglia, vita, miracoli, traslazioni, e culto del glorioso Martire S. Gennaro Vescovo di Benevento. *Decr.* 7, *Februarii.* 1718.
8. Franco Fernandez (Blas.) Vida della Venerable Sierva di Dios Maria de Jesus natural de Villa-Robledo. *Decr.* 15, *Januarii.* 1714.
9. Gentili Guiseppe. Vita della Madre Rosa Maria Serio di S. Antonio Priora del Monastero di S. Giuseppe di Fasano. *Donec corrigatur. Decr.* 7, *Octob.* 1746.

10. Giorgi Francesc' Antonio. Vita di S. Pietro Celestino. Parte 1 e 2. *Decr.* 29, *Maii.* 1690.
11. Gisolfo Pietro, Prodigio di mature Virtù nella Vita di Niccola di Fusco fanciullo di tre anni, e mesi. *Decr.* 15, *Januarii* 1684.
12. Guadagnini Gio. Battista. Vita di Arnaldo da Brescia. In Pavia, 1790. *Decr.* 2, *August*, 1790.
13. Gualdi Abbate. Vita di D. Olimpia Maldachini. *Decr.* 21, *Martii.* 1668.
14. The Lives of the Saints collected from authentic records of Church History, with a full account of the other festivals throughout the year, &c. *Decr.* 14, *Januarii.* 1737.
15. De Lorea Antonio. Epitome de la prodigiosa Vida, virtudes, y admirables escritos de la Venerable Madre Hipolita de Jesus y Rocaberti. *Decr.* 1, *Decemb.* 1687.
16. Di S. Lorenzo Francesco. Compendio della Vita miracolosa dei Santi Giovanni de Matha, e Felice Valesio, con una brevissima dichiaratione delle Sacre Indulgenze. *Decr.* 10, *Aprilis.* 1666.
17. Maggio Francesco Maria. Compendioso ragguaglio della vita, morte, e Monisterj della Madre D. Orsola Benincasa. *Decr.* 19, *Junii.* 1674.
18. ——— Vita della Madre Orsola Benincasa. *Decr.* 19, *Septemb.* 1679.
19. Il Piccolo Bollandista, o atti, e vite de'Santi di ciascun giorno. *Decr.* 19, *Januarii.* 1824.
20. Pignoni Pasquino. Compendio della vita, e miracoli del B. Andrea Avellino. *Donec corrigatur.* *Decr.* 22, *Januarii.* 1642.
21. Di Poggio Francesco. Vita della Madre Suor Cherubina dell' Agnus Dei. *Decr.* 13, *Martii.* 1679.
22. Rocaberti Hipolita de Jesus. Admirable Vida, doctrina, que escrivio de su mano por mandado de sus Prelados e Confessores. Libro primero, segundo, tercero, y quarto. *Decr.* 1, *Decembris.* 1687, *et* 10, *Septembris* 1688.
23. De Salazar D. Francisco Lobon. Historia del famoso Predicador Fray Gerundio de Campazas, alias Zotes. *Decr.* 1, *Septembris.* 1760.
24. Scaramelli P. Gio. Battista. Vita di Suor Maria Crocifissa Satellico, Monaca Francescana nel Monastero di Monte Nuovo. *Decr. S. Rit. Congr.* 3, *Octobris.* 1769.

Permittitur tamen editio emendata Romæ 1819. *Typis Vincentii Poggioli. Decr. S. Rit. Congr.* 13, *Aprilis*, 1820.

25. De Somma Agatio. Vie du Pape Pie V., escrite en Italien, et mise en Francois par M. F. *Decr.* 19, *Junii.* 1674.
26. Tableau historique des principaux traits de la Vie du bienheureux Jean Soanen Evêque de Senez. *Decr.* 5, *Junii.* 1741.
27. Tornamira e Gotho Pietro Antonio. Vita e morte del P. D. Girolamo Arminio di Napoli, detto comunemente il Flagello de'Demonii. *Decr.* 14, *Aprilis.* 1682.
28. Vie de Monsieur de la Noe-Mênard Prestre du Diocèse de Nantes, avec l'Histoire de son culte, et les relations des miraclez operez à son tombeau. *Decr.* 20. *Junii.* 1736.
29. De Vidaillan. M. A. Vie de Gregoire VII. 1073—1085. *Decr.* 27, *Augusti.* 1838.
30. Vita S. Rusinæ, seu Rosanæ Filiæ Austeri Romanorum Regis. *Decr.* 4, *Junii* 1661.
31. Vita di Donna Olimpia Maldachini Panfili Principessa di S. Martino: *sine annotatione nominis auctoris, et loci, Decr.* 5, *Decemb.* 1791.

The London Oratory,

Feast of St. Antony of Padua.
1852.

CONTENTS.

CHAPTER		PAGE
I.	Of the Faith of our blessed mother	3
II.	Of her hope	10
III.	Of her love of God	14
IV.	Her love of God continued	22
V.	Of her love of her neighbour	28
VI.	The same subject continued	38
VII.	Of her patient charity in bearing with her neighbour	46
VIII.	How she practised the four cardinal virtues	56
IX.	Of her piety and zeal in the divine worship	62
X.	Her devotion to the Blessed Sacrament at Mass, and at Communion	68
XI.	Of her devotion to and confidence in the Blessed Virgin	74
XII.	Of her devotion to her guardian angel and to the saints	82
XIII.	Of her love for poverty	86
XIV.	Of her love for her neighbour	92
XV.	Of her love for obedience	100
XVI.	Of her love for purity	109
XVII.	Of her love for humility	112
XVIII.	Of her love for humility, continued	119
XIX.	Of the sweetness and humility of her government	127
XX.	How she despised every thing which savoured of worldly vanity	136
XXI.	Of her love for regular observance	144
XXII.	Of her sweet conversation and exactness in silence	151

CHAPTER PAGE
XXIII. Begins to treat of the interior of our blessed Mother, and, first, of the honour and obedience which she paid to her director - - 158
XXIV. Of her ways of prayer - - - - 164
XXV. Of her ways of prayer continued - - - 168
XXVI. Of her interior trials - - - - - 176
XXVII. Of her temptations - - - - - - 181
XXVIII. Of the supernatural and extraordinary favours and graces which our blessed Mother received 190
XXIX. Of her abandonment to God and His Divine Providence - - - - - - - 194
XXX. Of her enlightenment and solidity in the direction of souls - - - - - - 201
XXXI. Her advice and maxims, especially on prayer 208

THE LIFE OF S. ROSE OF VITERBO.

BOOK I.

I. Origin of the monastery now called S. Rose, and the miraculous birth of the saint - - 221
II. From her infancy this virgin showed wonderful tokens of holiness - - - - 226
III. In her childhood little birds take refuge in her bosom - - - - - - - - 227
IV. How from her youth she learns to despise the world, to follow Christ - - - - - 229
V. How she was gifted by God with spiritual and personal graces. - - - - - - 231
VI. Of her virginity, and the graces bestowed upon her by the Holy Spirit - - - - - 232
VII. Of the many virtues she possessed - - - 234
VIII. Of the supernatural gifts she received from God 235
IX. She confines herself to a small chamber in the house - - - - - - - - 237
X. Of her fastings and severe mortifications - 239
XI. Her illness, and visions of heaven and hell - 240
XII. How, during her illness, she fell into a trance 242
XIII. In spirit she sees the Christian army in Syria, and prays for it - - - - - - 244

CHAPTER PAGE

XIV. Her illness increases, the Blessed Virgin appears to her - - - - - - - - - 246
XV. How she received her habit by a miracle - 250
XVI. Of the many people who went to see and hear S. Rose, and how her father's anger was thus excited - - - - - - - - 252
XVII. Her vision of Christ crucified - - - - 254
XVIII. Her vision of Christ glorified - - - - 257
XIX. Of her disciples, and how she taught them - 259
XX. Of the wisdom contained in her doctrine and sermons - - - - - - - - 260
XXI. Whilst preaching she was miraculously lifted up in the air - - - - - - - - 263
XXII. S. Rose disputes with and confounds the heretics 264
XXIII. She is accused before the judge as a seducer of the people - - - - - - - - 265
XXIV. How she was sent out of Viterbo by order of the Judge - - - - - - - - 267
XXV. How after a frightful journey, they arrive at Soriano - - - - - - - - 269
XXVI. S. Rose converts some of the Emperor's followers - - - - - - - - 272
XXVII. An angel appears to, and consoles her - - 272
XXVIII. She goes to Vitorchiano to convert the people, and there disputes with a magician - - 273
XXIX. S. Rose quits Vitorchiano, preaches in other places, then returns to Viterbo - - - 275
XXX. Pope Innocent the Fourth orders a juridical enquiry to be made into St. Rose's sanctity - 277
XXXI. How an Oratory was raised under the name of St. Rose, and what followed - - - 278
XXXII. St. Rose shuts herself up in her little cell, where she ends her life - - - - - - 280

BOOK II.

The History continued, containing the miracles wrought by St. Rose while living ; her holy death; the miraculous translation of her body; and the miracles performed by her intercession after her death.

I. At three years old S. Rose raises her aunt to life; - - - - - - - - - 283

CHAPTER PAGE

II. How when S. Rose was carrying bread to the poor, it was miraculously turned into roses 287
III. How a bird was stolen from Rose's mother, and the miracles attending its recovery - - 289
IV. The miraculous mending of a broken jug - 290
V. How S. Rose, whilst preaching, was struck by a heretic, and how her prophecy concerning him was fulfilled - - - - - - - 292
VI. Amongst other miracles she restores a blind man to sight - - - - - - 293
VII. How she foretells the death of the Emperor Frederic - - - - - - - 295
VIII. S. Rose restores a blind woman's sight - - 297
IX. S. Rose enters the burning flames and escapes unhurt - - - - - - - 299
X. S. Rose's prophecy on being denied entrance into S. Mary's monastery - - - - 302
XI. S. Rose's death and burial - - - - 304
XII. S. Rose appears to Pope Alexander the Fourth after her death - - - - - - 306
XIII. Of the translation of S. Rose's body, and the declaration of her sanctity - - - - 306

THE LIFE OF THE BLESSED MARY OF OIGNIES.

Of the great sanctity of many women in the diocese of Liege - - - - - 315
I. The early history of Mary of Oignies - - 328
Her marriage - - - - - - - 329
Of the conversion of her husband and their domestic life - - - - - - 330
Of the contempt and scorn with which they were treated - - - - - - - 332
Of Mary's compunction of heart - - - 333
II. Her great innocence of life - - - - 336
Her spirit of penance - - - - - 338
Her fasting - - - - - - - 340
III. Her assiduity in prayer, and its efficacy in driving away the devil - - - - - 343

CHAPTER PAGE
IV. Her watchings, her dress, and the labours which she underwent - - - - - 353
Of her manner of dress - - - - - 357
Of her manual labour - - - - - 359
Of her exterior modesty and sweetness of conversation - - - - - - - 361

BOOK II.

I. Of Mary's fear of God and love of poverty - 369
II. Of her piety and zeal in works of mercy - 377
III. Of the spirit of fortitude with which she was armed - - - - - - - - - 402
Of the spirit of good counsel with which she was endued - - - - - - - - 406
IV. Of the spirit of understanding which Mary possessed for the contemplation of divine things, and her knowledge of things future and absent - - - - - - - - - 413
Of the spirit of wisdom which made her to taste the sweetness of God's love on the Festivals of Christ and His saints - - - - 419
V. Her arrival at Oignies, where she died - - 427
Her pious and careful preparation for death - 429
Her last illness - - - - - - 437
Mary's holy death - - - - - - 443

PART III.

THE LIFE

OF

S. JANE FRANCES DE CHANTAL.

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH OF THE REV. MOTHER DE CHAUGY, HER NIECE AND SECRETARY.

PART III.

CHAPTER I.

OF THE FAITH OF OUR BLESSED MOTHER.

HAVING heard from a great, learned, and pious Cardinal, that faith is the foundation of the spiritual house, hope its walls, and charity the roof, we purpose commencing the recital of the virtues of our Blessed Mother by the solidity of her faith, inasmuch as it will be easier to build the edifice afterwards. Shall we inquire into the faith of her ancestors, paternal as well as maternal, who supported religion with their swords, their labours, and their fortunes? Some of them even lost their life rather than deviate ever so little from the faith or its support, and our Blessed Mother daily returned thanks to God that every one of her family, as far as she knew, were true Catholics. Now, we have shown above that God had truly

infused the sacred gift into the soul of our Blessed Mother from her tender infancy. Like little lambs who have such a natural dread and an irreconcileable antipathy to wolves, that they begin to cry and run away on seeing their skin; so this faithful and amiable sheep of the sacred flock of S. Peter, before she could even walk by herself, would cry most bitterly in the arms of her nurse, and hide her face if any heretic, who were then very numerous in France, wished to caress her. One day, one of the greatest noblemen in the kingdom, came to M. Frémiot's, to speak on some business connected with the state; after their business had finished, their conversation turned to matters of controversy, on which they both grew very warm. This nobleman had not been long a Huguenot; he said, that what pleased him the most in the reformed religion, was, that the real presence of our Lord was denied in the Blessed Sacrament; our Blessed Mother, who was then between four and five, escaping from her governess, who was endeavouring to amuse her in a corner of the room where these gentlemen were arguing, ran up to this great nobleman, and said to him, "My Lord, we must believe that Jesus Christ is in the Blessed Sacrament, because He has said it; for if you do not believe what He has said, you make Him a liar." This nobleman was extremely touched by the words of this child, and reasoned with her for a long time; she made such replies as astonished those who were present. This nobleman offered her some bon-bons, but the little darling would not even touch them, but

taking them in her pinafore, ran and threw them into the fire. "Look! my Lord, this is the way heretics will burn in the eternal fire of hell, because they do not believe what our Lord has said."

It seemed as if this future spouse of our Saviour had undertaken the conversion of this nobleman, for, contrary to her custom, instead of fleeing away frightened from the sight of a heretic, she stopped to reason with him, and said to him, among other things, "If you had contradicted the king, my papa, the president, would have you hanged—(she knew not that gentlemen were so far honoured as to be beheaded;)—you have now contradicted our Lord very often, and those two great presidents, (pointing to a picture of S. Peter and S. Paul,) will have you hanged." When she had grown up, as we have said above, she preferred to lose the good graces of her brother-in-law, the Baron d'Effran, rather than marry a heretic, and she protested that she would rather spend her life in an obscure prison than in a house belonging to an enemy of the faith; and from her very childhood she had such lively faith, that she even dived into hearts and discerned the believer and the misbeliever. How often has she told us of her sufferings in seeing the monasteries and churches which the heretics had destroyed, burnt, and profaned. She told us once, that when she heard that versicle of the Prophet Jeremiah chanted, "*Viæ Sion lugent,*" she called to mind her sufferings on seeing the monasteries and churches whence were banished the

exercise of religion, and which was deserted by all. This Blessed Mother composed a canticle on these words of Jeremiah, and was wont to say, "If I could have sung this canticle when I was young, I should have sung it daily." When, after her marriage she went to reside in the country, and on becoming a widow, she ordered those of her servants who had the best voice, to learn the chant of the *Credo*, to assist in singing it more solemnly at the parochial mass, in which she took very great pleasure; and afterwards, when a religious, she occasionally sang it at recreation. She paid a special devotion to the holy martyrs, because they had shed their blood for the faith, and to the saints of the first ages, because they had defended that holy faith by their writings and their labours, so that it became quite a proverb among us on the festivals of these great saints of the first centuries, to say, "It is one of our Mother's saints."

She was not satisfied with hearing these Lives read in the refectory, and speaking of them at recreation, but she had the book occasionally taken to her room to read it again in private, and in the latter years of her life she purchased the Lives of the Saints in two volumes, and marked the Lives of those great saints and first followers of the Church, which she read with great devotion. She had an especial devotion to S. Spiridion, who had captivated the reason of a subtle philosopher with the creed. She knew the hymn of S. Thomas by heart, "Adoro te devote," and often repeated it. She taught it to some of our

sisters, and told them that she always repeated the following verse two or three times:

Credo quidquid dixit Dei Filius,
I believe all the Son of God has spoken,

and at the commencement of her widowhood, so thoroughly did she abandon herself to her devotion, that she had no greater pleasure than in convincing her understanding with the following words: "I see the juice of the grape, and I believe it to be the Blood of the Lamb of God; I taste bread, and believe it to be the true Flesh of my Saviour;" but when she placed herself under the guidance of our Blessed Father, he taught her to simplify her faith, and to recite fervent and short acts of faith, thus showing her that the most simple and the most humble faith is also the most loving and the most solid. This Blessed Mother daily repeated, at the end of the Gospel of the Mass, the Credo and the Confiteor, and one day, while exhorting us to do likewise, she exclaimed, "O God! what need have we to humble ourselves, inasmuch as we are not deemed worthy to confess our creed before all the tyrants of the earth." When our Blessed Mother had certain sentences written on the walls of the cell, which was afterwards made the novitiate, she wrote on the wall below the crucifix the following verse from the Canticles, "I sat down under the shadow of my well-beloved, and his fruit was sweet to my palate." A sister begged her to say why she put the sentence in that place; "In order to be often making naked and simple acts of faith; for the

faith, though a light, is a shadow to the human reason, and I wish my reason to sit down in repose under the shadow of the faith which makes me believe that He who was placed on that cross with so much contempt, is the true Son of God." Another time, she said, that she had always the intention, when looking at the crucifix, that her mere look should be an act of faith similar to that of the Centurion, who, striking his breast, said, "Truly, Thou art the Son of God."

This Blessed Mother told a person in confidence, that while she was yet in the world, God had given her great light on the purity of faith, and showed her that the perfection of our understanding in this life, is its captivity and subjection to obscure matters of faith, and that the understanding would be enlightened in proportion as it should be humbly submissive to these obscurities, and that she always hated those sermons which attempted to prove by natural reason the mystery of the Holy and Adorable Trinity, and other articles of our faith; that the faithful soul must seek no other reason than that sole sovereign universal reason; namely, God has revealed these things, as far as was needful, to His Church. She never cared to hear of miracles in confirmation of the faith, nor revelations, and occasionally she made them pass them over while they were reading in the refectory the Lives of Saints, or sermons on the Festivals and Mysteries of our Lord and our Lady. She occasionally said to us, "What have we to do with proofs, miracles, and revelations, unless it be to bless God who has provided them for some

that have need thereof? God has revealed to us all that is necessary through His Church."

When our Blessed Mother composed the meditations for our retreats, extracted from the writings of our Blessed Father, she wished to have one on the incomparable grace we have of being children of Holy Church; she had it written on a separate sheet of paper, and told us that she had not got beyond this meditation during the whole of the two first days of her retreat. She read Holy Scripture by the order of her superiors, but, among all the books of this sacred volume, the Acts of the Apostles was her favourite, and it is impossible for us to say how often she read and re-read it; she related to us its contents with fresh fervour, and it seemed that each time she spoke of this primitive Church, that she told us something which we had never heard before. She wore on her heart for several years a protestation of faith, written with her own hand, and signed with her own blood. The enemy, aware of her great faith, laid several snares for her, as we shall presently mention when speaking of her interior temptations and trials; and as the Bishop of Puy devoutly and holily remarks, this Blessed Mother might be truly called the Martyr of Faith, as, whenever she struggled with temptations against our holy faith, she raised His standard in her heart, by applying thereto the Holy Name of Jesus, with iron and the fire.

CHAPTER II.

OF HER HOPE.

Our Blessed Mother once told us that she always invoked the holy Patriarch Abraham among her holy protectors, not only for the love which she bore to his great faith, but because he hoped against hope itself. We may well say of her, as a true daughter of Abraham, "*she hoped against all hope*" and human probability, and so God blessed and multiplied her holy generation, according to the truth of His promise. She had so firmly cast the anchor of her hope in God, that nothing was capable of turning her therefrom, as she showed when she abandoned her country, without any other support than this lively hope in God, who commanded her to leave her country, divesting herself of all human prudence to give herself up to the guidance of God. How many things did she undertake for the service of God, without any other foundation than the firm and immoveable hope that He, for whom she was working, would give her all that would be requisite for her. She wrote thus to Mother Peronne-Marie de Châtel, at the commencement of our house at Paris, (Rue S. Antoine,) "You enquire, my dear daughter, if we are poor; yes, I assure you, such is the case, and yet I do not think of it; Heaven and earth shall pass away, but the word of God dwells for ever; for the foundation of our hope, He has said

that if we seek His kingdom and His justice, He will provide the rest; I believe this and trust thereto. The extremity of our poverty enables us occasionally to practise high lessons of the perfection of holy confidence in God, and truly we see how good it is to trust to God and hope in Him against all human hope; for our establishment has been formed by Divine Grace, a thousand times better than we should have dared to hope."

On a very important occasion, and on a matter which she had exceedingly at heart, she said, respecting the difficulties that were pointed out to her: "It is not necessary for me to see any appearance of human support; it is sufficient to believe and hope that the word of God cannot be without its effect." She had marked and often sang Psalms which treat of this holy hope; among others, the following was the most familiar to her: "To Thee, O Lord, have I lifted up my soul. In Thee, O my God, I put my trust; let me not be ashamed. Neither let my enemies laugh at me, for none of them that wait on Thee shall be confounded."—(Psalm xxiv. 1—3.) All her hope of eternal happiness was founded on Jesus Christ, on the love which He bore from all eternity to His creatures, and in the loving desire which He had of preserving the work of His hands, and of giving eternal life to those who co-operate with His grace. "These three points," said she, "are the corner stones on which the solid house of our hope ought to be founded." She spoke as follows once to a very virtuous and devout personage who was living in

an imperfect dread of the judgments of God, which the sister, who was present, wrote down: "I assure you, my dear Father, when I look at our Saviour dying with love on the cross, it is not without a hope that He will make me live with love in glory. When I look at myself, in myself I tremble, and feel assured that without assistance I should merit hell; but when I look at myself at the foot of the cross, and embrace this sign of our salvation, the hope of heaven, which He has vouchsafed to me, is so lively that I forget hell; and rarely, indeed, do I think of it. Of all the vices which God has given me a horror of, there is none I loathe so much as despair, inasmuch as it is a deficiency of faith." The devout religious defended his fears by a number of reasons, but our Blessed Mother replied, that excessive fear in souls already advanced in the devout life, is a barrier to hope, and a cooling in charity; as humble hope in Jesus Christ is a spur to love. "As for myself," said she, "I have ever acted on two maxims, the one of David, the other of our Blessed Father; the first, '*Do well, and hope in God;*' the other, '*It is the will of God that our misery should be a throne for His mercy.*' Act, then, faithfully on these two maxims, and never look up to heaven without hope."

She had also a great attraction to those words of Job, "*Though He kill me, yet will I hope in Him.*" She said that she had always uttered these words, and with much consolations, in her interior trials. She was once asked if she ever thought on the joys of eternity, to

which she replied, in great humility: "I well know that we must hope through the merits of the Saviour, but my hope does not dwell there. I neither wish nor hope for any thing, unless it be that God may accomplish His will in me, and that He may be ever glorified. I do not wish that my hope should be to my own profit, but to the eternal glory of my God." She was also asked, if, during the various perils she had encountered while travelling, she had ever hoped that God would rescue her; she answered, no, but that she had always hoped that God would permit that which would be to His greater glory, either by saving her, or in putting an end to her life, and that she was perfectly tranquil in the enjoyment of this hope, and satisfied with the way in which God should dispose of her.

Our Blessed Mother, one extremely warm day, on going into the garden sat down on a stone step where there was a slight and refreshing breeze, but she immediately arose, saying, "There is too much for nature to take hold of in this." Having taken another seat, she was silent for a length of time, pinching the skin of her hands, when she heard one of her sisters say to another, "I should much like to know what our mother is thinking about, but I dare not ask her." Whereupon, turning round she said to them, "I was thinking that the flesh, which is earthly, desires to confine our souls to the earth, but the soul, aided by the Holy Ghost, will draw up our flesh to heaven, where this corruptible body shall be clothed in incorruption." And then, pinching

her hand, she said with great fervour, "I shall rise again in this flesh, and it will glorify the Sacred Humanity of my Redeemer; this hope reposes in my breast."

CHAPTER III.

OF HER LOVE OF GOD.

This Well-beloved of the Lord, having abandoned everything for love of Him, was of opinion that that sovereign love which had induced her to leave all, was nothing compared to that which urged her, at every instant, to sacrifice her life in the service of God, to be more perfectly united to her Heavenly Spouse, and by her dying to herself to let His Sovereign Love live in her. Oh, how thoroughly did this holy love, by the jealousy of her noble heart, expel every other love which could hinder the perfect sovereignty of its divine effect! He that is married, has a divided heart. The Divine Spouse desiring that our Blessed Mother should seek with a single heart His sole and only love took away from her the Baron de Chantal, her dear husband, on whom she doated. He took away, I say, her husband, in order that she might be His faithful spouse yet more perfectly, and from the moment of her widowhood He took possession of her heart and affections with so great a power and such a sweet authority, that the love of no creature was ever in her a rival to the love of the

Creator, which so captivated her, that she immediately engaged herself by vow to this holy love, and it, taking possession of this noble soul, exercised in her and by her its power, governing her after His good pleasure, like a happy prisoner. He led her through many different roads, and such narrow paths, that it would have frightened all but those who were versed in the conduct of love.

The first sacrifice which this Blessed Mother made to love, was that of her own will, by so earnest a desire to obey, that she only thought of being directed in the ways of God. The sovereign taste of this love disgusted her so strongly with the things of this earth, that as she herself said, as we have above related, she would have willingly abandoned father, children, country, and all, to go and live in a desert, and enjoy her Well-beloved. To be happy in the conversation of our Well-beloved, is a great sign of love; our Blessed Mother, at the time of her widowhood, was so well pleased with her solitude, to be alone with her Love, that she abandoned all worldly and useless conversations, and never entered into society, except when duty, charity, or civility required it. This holy love went on purifying her; it urged her to that which was good, admonished, instructed, separated her from everything, and at last imprisoned her gloriously in a small house, in one of the faubourgs of this town, to commence our little congregation.

Here it was that the victorious love became

more and more indefatigable in the practice of every virtue, and where our Blessed Mother received not only the superabundant grace of believing and loving, but of doing and suffering much for her Well-beloved. The physicians, and even our Blessed Father, attributed the unknown illness, from which our Blessed Mother suffered in the first years of her religious life, to the sweet violence of the heavenly love; and our Blessed Father was wont to say that holy love desired to make our Blessed Mother a S. Angela, a S. Catherine, or some other loving saint, and that she corresponded to it with admirable fidelity. Her love, though flavoured with great heavenly joy, was strong, generous, and perfectly independent of all spiritual pleasure and sensible sweetness; a courageous love to undertake great things for the glory of God; a constant love, supporting her in her labours; a love bold in difficulties; a love submissive in opposition; a love always adhering to the Divine Will; a love wise and discreet; a love perfectly disinterested, and free from selfishness; a love which made her resign everything to the Providence of her Lover; a love of simple confidence; a love of a spouse and a daughter, which remained ever firm, and perfectly chaste and filial; an humble love, which induced her to desire her total annihilation, in order that her Well-beloved might thereby be exalted; a love which confirmed her in perfect oblivion of self, by a continual remembrance of her God; a love of conformity, which made her rejoice in following in holy abjection Jesus Christ abject, in living in

the agony of Calvary, in the sufferings of desertion on the cross, tasting but gall and vinegar in her interior, and occasionally contempt and contradiction from men; such was the holy love which enabled her to persevere till the end with an ever increasing fidelity in the service of God. An admirable fidelity, which can only be known in heaven, because this loving fidelity existed not only in the sweetness of interior peace, but in the chill, the horror, the length and violence of the spiritual war, as will be presently said.

The Rev. Father Jean Bertrand, Vice Rector of the college of the holy Company of Jesus, who was a learned and virtuous religious, to whom our saint spoke in great confidence, said one day to our very good and beloved Mother Peronne-Marie de Châtel, that if any wished to learn how he ought to practise the first and great commandment of loving God with all his heart, with all his soul, and his neighbour as himself, he should consider the conduct of our Blessed Mother; that she had received an admirable knowledge of this first command; "and I do not think," he added, "Divine Love ever had a more absolute dominion over a soul, and it would be difficult to find one more thoroughly abandoned to Divine Love than herself." She loved not only in words, but in deeds and in truth.

His Eminence the Cardinal de Bérulle, founder of the Fathers of the [French] Oratory, and who died in the odour of sanctity, once when he was administering the communion to our Blessed Mother at Dijon, after she was a widow, perceived by

a supernatural light that this soul was interiorly directed by an extraordinary road. After mass he enquired who was that widow, and said, "Her heart is an altar where the fire of love is never extinguished, and it will become so vehement, that it will consume not only the sacrifices, but the altar," which, indeed, came to pass. When our Blessed Mother was in Paris for the foundation of our first house, this Cardinal went to visit her, and said, on his return, to the Countess de S. Paul, a princess of high interior piety, that he had seen one of the greatest lovers God had on earth. He took several ladies to converse with our Blessed Mother on their interior life, telling them that she was the amorous Shunamite, destined to lead her companions in celestial love through the most perilous paths.

On the Festival of S. Basil, 1632, she endured so great a shock of Divine Love, that she was unable to speak at recreation. She stood with her eyes closed, and her face all flushed, and endeavoured to amuse herself by spinning. When she saw herself unable to do anything else, she made them sing, and endeavoured to sing herself the following hymn, which she had once requested our very honoured Mother de Bréchard to compose for her :—

"Pourquoi donner à mon âme
Quelque travail ou souci,
Puisque l'amour que l'enflamme
Ne le permet pas ainsi ?

Il me meut et me governe
Tout au gré de son désir,
Et je n'ai ni but ni terme
Que son céleste plaisir.

Mon cœur n'a de complaisance
Qu'aux entretiens amoureux
De cette Divine Essence,
Seul objet des Bienheureux."

This hymn somewhat diverted her, and to conceal the grace communicated, she began speaking to us, but with words full of love, which were then noted down: "My daughters, neither S. Basil, nor the majority of our holy fathers and pillars of the Church were martyred. Why do you think it was so?" After each of us had replied, she said, "And, for my part, I believe there is a kind of martyrdom called the martyrdom of love, in which, God preserving the life of His servants to work for His glory, makes them both martyrs and confessors at once. I know that such is the martyrdom to which the daughters of the Visitation are destined, and that God will make those suffer who will be so happy as to wish it." A sister inquired how this martyrdom was to be effected. "Give your absolute consent to God, and you will feel it. Divine love stabs us with a sword in the most secret and intimate parts of our souls, and separates us from ourselves. I know a soul whom love has separated from things which cost her more than if tyrants had separated her body from her soul with their swords." We know that she spoke of herself. A sister inquired how long this martyrdom would last. "From the time that we give up ourselves unreservedly to God, till our death; but this is to be understood of generous hearts, who are faithful to love; for our Lord does not make martyrs of weak and inconstant

hearts; He is content to let them go their own low road, lest they should escape Him, for He will never do violence to free will." She was then asked if this martyrdom of love equalled corporal martyrdom. "Let us not seek equality," she replied, "though I am of opinion that one does not exceed the other, for love is strong as death, and the martyrs of love suffer infinitely more in preserving their life to do the will of God, than if they laid it down as a testimony of their faith, their love, and their constancy." Again, after the Life of S. James the Martyr had been dead, who had been cut to pieces, our Blessed Mother said that she was of opinion, that that martyrdom was a portrait of the martyrdom of love, except that that of love was of a longer duration, and that the sword daily cut off something from a soul truly faithful, and that the secret sufferings of a soul, which sets no limit to the operations of love, are not to be imagined.

When our dear Mother de Châtel was elected superioress, (1635) seeing amid some notices of our Blessed Mother written by one of our sisters, an account of this occurrence on the festival of S. Basil, she urged her to relate what had passed in her soul on that day; our Blessed Mother being very obedient, replied, "It is very true, my dear Mother, God showed me that day, while meditating on S. Basil, the martyrdom of love through which He had determined that the daughters of this little congregation should pass; that is, I repeat, for those who desire to give themselves up absolutely to love; and I had vouchsafed to me a

light after communion, which showed me that the life of the genuine daughters of this institute must be a daily death, to live in this world after the evangelical fashion, and that their work is to immerse themselves in God, and to lose all that is their own in this Ocean of goodness, to do and suffer all that will be pleasing to His love; but," added she, with tears in her eyes, "you must not lay any weight on my thoughts, for my infidelity deprives me of their fruit. I have spoken to, and urged our sisters in the fervour of love, and I have fallen myself into a state of much lukewarmness." She said this, because on the morrow of the festival of S. Basil, 1632, when God had shown her the perfection of the martyrdom of love, He again placed her in His sacred crucible, leaving her holy soul so abandoned to interior trials, temptations, and sufferings, that she no longer recognized herself. This state lasted the rest of her life, though this rose of charity always preserved itself fresh and with great odour, sometimes more, sometimes less, by the force of her active love, capable of doing and bearing everything for the love of Him who afflicted her.

CHAPTER IV.

HER LOVE OF GOD CONTINUED.

This ardent love of God made our Blessed Mother so vehemently long to please Him whom she loved, that she obliged herself by a vow to do that which should be the most perfect and the most agreeable to God; and as our Blessed Father wrote to her, her heart, lovingly attentive to her celestial Lover, had no leisure to turn on herself; love continually turning her soul towards the object loved. And as this saint said to her in the same letter, the care which she took of her purity of soul, made her like unto loving doves which wash in pools, not that they may be handsome, but to please their lover. Was not hers a very simple love, since not purifying herself solely to be pure, she did not adorn herself with virtues to be beautiful, but only to please her Divine Lover; and if ugliness had been as agreeable to Him, she would have loved it as much as beauty? Her love did not look at all either to reward or enjoyment, so that she never spoke of love, but always of its effects.

Once, as she was told that a sister enjoyed great interior consolation, and that she loved our Lord exceedingly, our Blessed Mother, as one experienced in true love, replied, "To taste of the sweetness of God is not solid love, but to hu-

miliate ourselves, to suffer insults, to be exact to our rule, to die to self, to live without any interest, to wish to be known by God alone, this is truly to love, and to have the ineffable marks of love." She thus wrote on this subject to a superioress of our congregation: "As to this good daughter, who believes herself so elevated in love, and is not so in virtue, I believe that her feelings are the work of nature and self-love; for, my dear daughter, you must know that divine love instructs the soul not so much in lofty thoughts as in a faithful observance of the rule, and the holy virtues of self-denial, self-oblivion, love of humility, and patience, which knows how to suffer everything. Oh, my dear daughter! may God protect us from this sensible love, which permits us to live in ourselves, for it leads to death; so that we may be thoroughly possessed by that divine love, which, leading as it does to the death of self, brings us at length to the love of God! The souls who have a true love of work, will not fail at one time or other, to feel the working of love in them.

The Rev. Father Binet, provincial of the holy Company of Jesus, in the province of Paris, once said to our dear Sister Anne Catherine de Beaumont, who was the then superioress in that city, "Love has so closed the eye of selfishness in Mother de Chantal, that she has no longer any love of hope, though she possesses this virtue (hope) in an eminent degree, but when I interrogated her in order that I might know her a little, she told me that because grace and glory are in

God, she hopes for everything, without ever thinking of anything but Him, and that if glory and happiness could be separated from God, she would never take any step to acquire them, but only tend to God alone." "This purity of love," added this good religious, "delighted me much."

This Blessed Mother had certain maxims and principles of virtue which she had written with her own hand and extracted from Holy Writ; first, "God hath loved us with an eternal love." She remarked, that this ought to lead the soul to an eternal desire of love. Secondly, "God has so loved the world, that He hath given it His only Son;" the soul ought to correspond to this love, so that it may be said that she has so loved God, as to give Him, by an absolute gift, her free will, and that as the world treated the Son of God roughly as soon as He arrived there, without that good Saviour being able to resist any more than a lamb led to the slaughter, so let God do in us, and with us, for Himself, what He pleases, without our resisting Him. Thirdly, she wrote, not on paper only, but it was also written on her heart, "He who loves Me, let him keep My commandments." She often repeated this sentence, and we have heard her say, that love is ungrateful and unworthy of the name, if it be not faithful in doing the will of God."

She once said to a novice who was prepared to take our habit, that she should greatly purify her intention, as it would be an avaricious love to leave the world, which is nothing in order to possess God, who is all." "No, my child," said she,

"the faithful soul must leave everything, in order that, being free from everything, she may neither possess nor be possessed of anything, but be thoroughly at the disposal and mercy of Divine love, in order that it may do with her what it pleases." While she was in one of the largest cities in France, a religious, a soul of great virtue, desired to speak with her respecting her soul, which she readily allowed. These two great servants of our Lord, discovering to each other in all simplicity the paths by which our Lord had led them, the religious said to our Blessed Mother, that she was occasionally so tried interiorly, as to be reduced to great weakness and extreme langour; that she was obliged to be contented therewith, knowing that God is God, without her daring to call Him *her* God, or even thinking that He was *her* God. Our saint's reply was as follows: "I shall leave that point to you, my dear Mother, and I shall never practise this abnegation; however tormented and beaten down my soul has been, it has never been so low that I could not say, My God, Thou art my God, and the God of my heart; for if the faith teaches me that He is my God, the baptism which I have received makes me realize that of a truth, He *is* my God." The religious immediately replied, that it seemed to her that in saying that word, my God, we had not arrived at a perfect spirit of abnegation; to which our Blessed Mother replied, that our feeling of abandonment could never equal that of the Son of God, and that in the greatest of His trials, He

had said "My God! My God! why hast Thou forsaken Me?" adding, "I have often said to our Lord when most severely tried, that if it was His pleasure that I should dwell in hell, provided it could be done without my offending Him, and that my eternal torment should be to His eternal glory, I should be satisfied, and that for all that He should be always my God." Our Blessed Mother gave this religious the following lines, saying that she delighted in singing them amid her sufferings.

"Comme un cuir sèché se retire
Au chaud, tel suis de douleur,
Mais j'ai toujours vos lois au cœur
Sans prendre garde à mon martyre;
Rien ne me console en ce lieu,
Que de savoir: Dieu est mon Dieu."

She thanked our Blessed Mother for the light which she had imparted to her, declaring that she was well fitted to be her mistress in divine love, and that she would never forget her maxims, and that there was no more delicate matter in the spiritual life than the knowing how to follow the example which the Father has set us in His Son our Lord.

Our Blessed Mother said to our very dear Sister Anne Catherine de Beaumont, that she had often thought of the conversation which she had with this very virtuous religious; and that the distinction of saying God, and not daring to add *My* God, was insupportable; and that had God given her such an idea, she believed that her heart would have broken with grief. "Willingly

would I suffer the privation of the feeling and experience of that sweet truth, that God is my God, but I would rather die a thousand deaths than lose the belief and trust of it." Once when some of our sisters told our Blessed Mother that M. de Châtel always carried the Canticle of Canticles with her, and that it was the most ordinary subject of her meditation; she replied, "It is her special attraction, and she deserves it, as she is a very faithful and loving spouse; but as for myself I dare not even use more than four or five verses of this canticle, My inclination is for the evangelical maxims. Yet inasmuch as our Blessed Father marked out for me at the commencement of the book of our Institutions, the following words of the Spouse: '*Let my Well-beloved kiss me with the kisses of His mouth.*' I use these words towards the Blessed Sacrament, but not otherwise, as it would be demanding favours and caresses of love due to that pure spouse, and not to a poor unprofitable servant."

Her love was so pure that she was perfectly satisfied that her heavenly Spouse should treat her as a gatherer of myrrh, ever seeking after mortification, and ever insatiable for a greater increase in love. She never made so much account of the love of mildness as of that of grief and profound humility. She had written on a wall on the most frequented passage of the convent all the admirable qualities which S. Paul gives to charity, that it is "*patient, kind, mild, believeth everything, suffereth everything.*" She called this sentence the mirror of the convent,

and she occasionally ordered the sisters, who had accused themselves of some fault against charity, to go and read the sentence, and she would go with them, making them meditate on the following verse: "*If I speak with the tongues of angels, and have not charity, I am nothing; and if I should deliver my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing.*" She spoke of the honour with which we should honour the commandments of God, showing us that it was obligatory to do so. She spoke often of the first commandment; and during the two last years of her life she had learned to chant these divine commandments, as children chant them at the end of the catechism; and truly we might say, that she loved God with all her heart, with all her strength, and with all her mind, and that her whole being was sacrificed to love and the service of love.

CHAPTER V.

OF HER LOVE OF HER NEIGHBOUR.

The love of God and our neighbour being united by the Holy Spirit in one and the same commandment, we must not separate them, inasmuch as the love of her neighbour was a flourishing tree, bearing fruits for immortality in the heart of our Blessed Mother, while the love of God was its very precious and pure root. She once told

us that her first director had taught her to love all her neighbours in God, by certain practices of devout imagination, which gave her much difficulty; but on communicating it to our Blessed Father, he replied, that she should love and bless God in all His creatures; that if we must look at creatures in themselves, it must be on the bosom of the Saviour; and that she had ever after adhered to this custom. She loved her relations with a very pure and perfect love; ever showing her love for them by a true desire of doing them some spiritual good. All her letters were either on business or respecting the welfare of their souls. Following the example of our Lord, she dearly loved those who loved her, and affectionately responded to those whom she saw confided in her, although she had no attachment, weakness, eagerness, or mere natural tenderness for them; all sympathetic and complaisant love was completely annihilated in her, and placed under the law of pure love. All that put their trust in this Blessed Mother could truly say that they had a faithful friend, and a source of life and consolation to their souls. She was not satisfied with loving those only who loved her, but ascending yet higher, she loved those whom she knew had a dislike to her.

She had written a great many texts from Holy Writ on love to our neighbour. The first was "*Do good to the ungrateful, to imitate the kindness of our Heavenly Father.*" The second, "*Jesus Christ hath loved us, and washed us in His Blood.*"

On which she wrote thus to a religious who had

some difficulty as regards charity towards her neighbour. "My dear daughter, meditate often on these words, '*Jesus Christ hath loved us, and washed us in His Blood.*' Why has He so loved us, since we were such vile creatures? He has loved us by an excess of charity, because He wished to wash us in His Blood; for He waited not until we should be washed to love us. Believe me, my dear daughter, we should love our neighbour without examination, altogether poor, deformed, or whatever he is; and if there were any means whereby we could wash away his imperfections by our blood, we should give it to the last drop."

She was wont to say that she had found nothing in Holy Writ which had given her a greater subject for meditation than these words of Jesus Christ to His Apostles: "*This is My commandment, that you love one another, as I have loved you.*" He said in general to the world, "*Love your neighbour as yourself;*" but to the Apostles, to religious souls, "*Love one another as I have loved you, and as My Father hath loved Me.*" "This ought to show us the boundlessness of our charity for our neighbour; for the Father and the Son loved, love now, and will love one another with an eternal love, with a love of inseparable equality and unity; and the Gospel says that "Our Lord has loved His own till the end."

When our Blessed Mother spoke of love of our neighbour, it was with such eloquence, such fire, and such abundance of texts from Scripture, that,

had not our time for talking been limited, I know not when she would have finished. She loved us, indeed, more than herself, since she gave herself for our good, and pointed out for us the path of salvation in our small congregation. She loved us with such a communicative love, that she made no mystery of the most secret counsels which our Blessed Father gave her for her interior conduct. She said very graciously, "Though I am not obliged to give any account to our sisters, yet I have no secret from them, for they know by what road our Lord hath led me." She had a small book, wherein was written all the advice she had ever received from our Blessed Father, as well for her prayers as her temptations; and a second book written by our Blessed Father as well as herself. This contained questions on some difficult points connected with the welfare of her soul. She constantly lent these little books to our sisters as they wanted them, pointing out those parts which would be useful to them; and to several, when they spoke to her respecting their trials, she said, "I had that temptation at such a time; our Blessed Father gave me such and such advice; or I read such a thing, which I found extremely useful; see if it will be of any use to you." In a word, she could well say to her daughters, "I have imparted to you all that I have received from our Blessed Father."

She loved us with a love of obedience, not only by the rare example which she gave us of that virtue, but by the violence which she

employed to acquire a certain feeling of charity towards her neighbour, which we have so often seen and admired, but which we know not how to express. She once said that she was extremely careful in catching all the just and virtuous inclinations of our sisters, in order that she might do things, or leave them undone, by an exercise of obedience or charity.

She loved us with an equal love, being all things to all; and though she was always among us with the majesty of a saint, which rendered her truly venerable, yet it was with the gentleness of a dove, which made it no difficult matter for us to address her. She always behaved as one of us; and said to a religious whom she desired to rescue from his excessive spirit of austerity, "Do you see me, old as I am, and overwhelmed with business?—I have no reason to laugh or speak; and yet if you saw me with our young people, I speak to them, I listen to them, I laugh, generally without joy, at what they say, to cheer them in their recreation, because, they say, that is necessary to them.

She loved us with such a love of union, that while speaking of some sisters who imagined that they were not loved by her, "These dear souls do me great wrong, for I assure you there is not a nun of the Visitation, whoever she be, that is not inseparable from my heart." She also was wont to say that this convent of Annecy was in the very core of her heart, and the other houses of the Institute were arranged around it, mentioning some where she had re-

marked a more perfect virtue, and a great zeal for the observance of the rule, and a love of humility, because she felt that those convents approached the nearest to Annecy. We cannot express how mutual charity, holy friendship, and unity flourished in this house as well as in the others of the Institute. When foundations were formed, it was the first advice she gave or wrote to those who were going to be superiors. She especially strove after a great and holy union between her daughters. When she wrote to any community, or to the sisters of the novitiate of any house, she never omitted to recommend holy and mutual friendship, and consequently cordial esteem; she was often heard to say with deep feeling, and great tears standing in her eyes, that she should die if she did not see unity in a community of the Visitation of the Blessed Virgin.

We may say that she loved us to the end in her last triennium, which was at the very close of her life. I do not remember any recreation or chapter in which she did not recommend this reciprocal esteem and love. When the end of her triennium drew nigh, she read us in chapter the Treatise which the Rev. Father Rodriguez made on religious union, and commissioning a sister to mark the most beautiful passages, to read them, she said to her, "In these last acts of my superiorship, I wish to speak to our sisters of charity and love, because all things that are said to be a person's last, are more deeply engraved on the heart; this mutual love and charity are the good

things which I would wish to give to this community."

Before resigning her last superiorship she spoke twice to the community on love of our neighbour; and was so excited that, passing through the sisters, she turned graciously to each of them individually, and said, bowing to them, "Love! Love! Love! my daughters, I know nothing else." A sister whom she had ordered to write a letter, said, "Mother, I will say in this letter that your charity is in its old age, and that, like your godfather, S. John, you only speak to us of love;" whereon our Blessed Mother replied, "Do not, my daughter, make this comparison, for we must not profane the saints in comparing them to poor sinners; but you will, indeed, oblige me if you repeat to those sisters what I told you about two years ago; that if I trusted to my own courage, if I followed my own inclination, and if I did not fear to annoy my sisters, I would never speak of anything else but love, and I assure you," added she, with admirable innocence and love, "that I never open my mouth without desiring to say, '*Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and thy neighbour as thyself.*'"

If our Blessed Mother heard that any coolness existed between any of our sisters, she had no rest until she had effected their reconciliation, and exaggerated the sin of letting charity wax cold. She quoted to us, and repeated several times those words of Solomon, "*Six things they are which the Lord hateth, and the seventh His soul detesteth; those who sow discord among brethren.*" She once said,

with great zeal, that if justice was done, those who sowed words of disunion ought to have their tongues cut off; adding, with great fervour, that she would wish her own tongue to be cut out, and that she would willingly suffer it, if by this means she could banish from all religious houses and the world, all sowers of discord and gossip-breeding disunion. There was no imperfection which she censured with greater severity than sins against the virtues of holy charity and union, nor for which she was so forward to impose penances. She often told us that a great tenderness of conscience was required, in order to speak well of our neighbour; and that if we sinned ever so little against this holy union we should confess it minutely, and not generally; telling us that it was impossible for us to conceive how easy it is to offend our Lord when we speak of our neighbour, especially if we have the slightest shadow of jealousy in any case. We have above said, that she spoke to us twice at the conclusion of her last triennium upon mutual charity and union, and among other things, she said to us, that if, when our dear superioress, Mother Marie Aimée de Blonay, should arrive among us, she perceived that any of us spoke of the past faults of our sisters, she would beg the bishop to give the guilty sister a good penance. "Be extremely careful, my dear sisters, to try and put each other in the good graces of the superioress; why should you recall the past faults of your sisters? why should you throw a shadow on their virtues? by

so doing you commit a great sin, and she who thinks of lowering the character of her sisters will not lower, but altogether lose her own. I who know the imperfections of all, shall be very careful in what I say to our dear Mother when she comes, for I shall only speak of your good natural inclinations and not of your past faults; she will know and correct the imperfections which you may commit while she is superioress." After the arrival of our dear Mother, our saint told her before the community of the prohibition she had laid on us, of not speaking of past faults. Our Mother de Blonay replied, that she was glad to hear of this prohibition, as she did not like to hear the faults of others spoken of, save when necessity and charity required it, according to our rule. Whereon our Blessed Mother de Chantal embraced her affectionately, and said to her with a smile, "My dear Mother, God has given you of His blessings in abundance; I love you more than ever I did." Speaking another time in private to our very dear Mother, to give her some insight into the community, she took the card on which all the names were written, and said all that was good of them, adding, "I will let you know more when occasion shall bring before me faults of each" She told the sister who wrote for her to place among the memoranda, which she had now been in the habit of drawing up for several months, that she must remember to inform the houses that at the various changes of superiors, great faults were committed against charity and union; and writing

to the new and late superiors, she said to them, "My dear daughters, you will be delighted to hear that I am about to inform you of a light which God has given me, and which, if God should give me leisure, I would communicate to our houses; that when a superioress is elected no mention must be made, under any pretext whatever, save when absolutely necessary, of the past faults of the sisters, as it would only occasion sin. We have elected our good Mother de Blonay; you know that she is a soul on whom the utmost confidence may be reposed: nevertheless, to put this practice into action here, and if I can everywhere else in the Institute, I do not wish our sisters to speak to her, nor myself either, of the faults of our sisters committed before her arrival; do the same likewise, my dear sisters, and you will find that this practice of universal charity will obtain for you great blessings from Heaven. Alas! my daughters, the whole good of our Institute depends on the mutual union of our hearts." She had posted up at the door of our assembly room, on the wall, the following lines, which she loved much, and which she occasionally sang:—

"O que c'est un bien qui me contente
Quand les frères d'amour constante
Vivent unis ensemblement!
Car, où la concorde est suivie,
Le Seigneur y donne la vie,
Paix et repos abondamment."

As our Blessed Mother inculcated this charity

so greatly during her life, so also there was nothing which she recommended so earnestly at her death.

CHAPTER VI.

THE SAME SUBJECT CONTINUED.

Our Blessed Mother was never backward in doing any good to her neighbour. She was not satisfied with an affective love, but joined thereto an effective love, and did good to all according to her power. She was exceedingly zealous for the salvation of her dear neighbour's soul, and reflected deeply on that passage of Holy Writ, word by word, "God hath given charge to each one of his neighbour's soul." This desire for the salvation of souls induced her to obtain the establishment of the mission of M. Vincent de Paul in this diocese, for the instruction of the poor villagers; and when she received the reply of the Commander de Sillery, in which he told her that he accepted the inspiration that God had given her of establishing the Fathers of the Missions in this diocese, and that he would be its founder, it would be impossible for us to express the joy which this news gave her, and her gratitude to God and man. She wished our convent to take on itself the preparing of the house to receive these gentlemen, to provide their furniture and linen of the sacristy, dormitory,

and refectory; and desiring to take part therein, she said with great gaiety, "When I think that these good gentlemen come to instruct and feed the sheep of our Blessed Father with the word of God, I know not what I would not do for them." She would take great delight in speaking of the effects produced by the sermons of these fathers, and very often, when she saw the porteress come to the recreation, would ask her, if she had learnt anything new.

We found the following words written by herself on the back of one of her letters, "To remember to beg the Bishop of Geneva to teach the people that they should hear mass with reverence and devotion, and offer to God in the morning the actions of the day." She was always careful in telling our prelates that which she had in view for the good of their flocks; or if she saw or heard anything of the canons or ecclesiastics which required to be censured, she did not hesitate to communicate it to their superiors, and said, that as the soul is the principal part of man, so also the best, the principal part of charity, should be exercised towards the soul. She suffered greatly when she did not succeed in curing her neighbour of those faults which she was commissioned to censure in him, and did all in her power to attain her end. She spoke mildly, but firmly, as her neighbour's good required, but always with great charity and an incredible desire to benefit their souls. Once, when it was essentially necessary that she should, to cure a neighbour of a few imperfections, do something which would dis-

please a personage of high standing, she expressed her great sorrow for so acting, but that, nevertheless, it was utterly impossible for her to see that soul remain so obstinate in its defects; and though she might be in disgrace with all the world, she could not betray the souls committed to her charge. She often said that if she had a thousand lives, she would willingly lay them all down for the salvation of her neighbour.

We shall now speak of her charity towards the poor; were we to particularize, we should be obliged to write several volumes. Those who held the office of Porteress and Manciple under our Blessed Mother bear witness that they never found her so sweet as when they asked her permission to bestow some charity on the poor; for we do not wish to speak of that admirable charity which induced her in the most rigorous season to sacrifice her life and her liberty in the service of the bodies and souls of the poor. She had instructed a porteress, when she asked for permission to give some alms, to say, "Will it please your charity to give something in the name of our Lord?" and she replied with attention, devotion, and unparalleled satisfaction: "Yes, my daughter, give alms to our Lord, and for His love." She herself spoke to the out sisters, and commanded them to make every inquiry respecting the condition of those who begged, and to be careful in making broth, *panados*, and such other things for the sick. She has sometimes even gone herself to the dispensary, and the store-room, to beg for the poor, saying, "My

daughter, in the name of our Lord give me such and such a thing for our poor," and went away full of joy to carry it to the sister porteress, saying to her with graceful sweetness, "See, I am a much better beggar than you are; I have had such and such a thing given me." We have often heard her say that she did not like our convents giving presents to wealthy persons, unless they were under some great obligations to them; and that we should economize the property which God gave us, not to enrich ourselves, but to be charitable to the poor. We have seen her take upon herself the task of examining the food of a sick Capuchin monk, twice a day for weeks, to assure herself that it was well cooked. Whenever any of these sick religious came to our convent, she desired that our own food should be given them. She had entered into an agreement with the Father-Guardian, that when they should be in necessity, and unable to find assistance anywhere else, they should come to this house as to their refuge; and when they had strange fathers, and came to the convent to ask for food for them, our Blessed Mother used to go down, and say to the sister charged with the dispensary, "Do you think, my daughter, you could do something for our good Capuchin Fathers?"

When the evils of war obliged several inhabitants of Burgundy to retire into this city, it is impossible to express the charitable attentions which our saint paid to these unhappy refugees, giving a certain quantity of bread weekly to poor families, and doing them many other charities.

She used to say, when they were astonished at the great quantity of bread given by her, although there was only the usual provision of corn, "Give boldly, my daughters, in the name of the Lord, you will see that at the end of the year your expenses will not be increased by it;" which was so true, that in the year that we paid attention thereto, our superiors were astonished at so large a community having to buy so little corn. We have often seen our saint much affected, and almost heart-broken when unable to give her neighbour the assistance he required; and once referring to a nobleman who had been ruined by the war, and knew not where to go, she told us with a feeling of great compassion, "I assure you that if the Commander de Sillery had been alive, I should have asked him for one or two thousand crowns to build a small house, where persons in a like condition might retire." Our Blessed Mother never refused to see any who required instruction or consolation; but it is true she went to see and console the poor with a more special and gay alacrity. She never regretted her time as lost with them, saying that towards such she was able to practise all the offices of charity at once; to console the afflicted, to teach the ignorant, to point out to them the benefit they should obtain from their tribulation, and to hear from their own mouths what was necessary to console them. She had ordered the sister who had charge of the laundry, to put on one side the torn linen for the poor, and to baste the pieces together for her to mend them; and if she had been permitted, she would have learned

from our shoemaker sisters how to mend the old shoes for the poor. Her charity was neither indiscreet nor extravagant; she never bestowed any alms to the prejudice of her community, unless her neighbour was in extreme necessity; as it happened one year, when she asked our sisters if they would not be glad to continue the Lent after Easter, or at least to abstain on some days in the week, in order to be able to assist the poor. During the time of the plague, the community consented at her suggestion to eat black bread, in order to be able to succour the sick. The great charities which our Blessed Mother almost every year furnished to many of our poor convents are to be found in our account books, and seeing that this house could not relieve all the wants of the others, she asked aid of those which she believed to be able to give it, and she generally wrote these letters herself, as they were for charity. We once saw her shed tears of joy on reading a letter from our very honoured Sister Anne Thérese de Préchonnet, superioress of Rouen, who informed her that some of her novices had collected several things which belonged to them, and were not in their dowry, to make a little fund, in order to assist these poor monasteries: "See," said she "this invention of charity fills my heart with gratitude towards this good mother and her daughters." She wrote them a letter of thanks, in the sweetest possible terms.

Once our beloved Sister Anne Elizabeth Perrin, superioress of Puy, wrote to her, saying that she had been informed that several of our houses were

very poor, and consequently she and her community had resolved, as they were not yet in easy circumstances, to fast, in order to assist those who were the most necessitous. Our worthy Mother was so delighted at her charity, that she kissed this letter, and said to us, "See, this is a letter which has come from the heart and hand of a true daughter of the Visitation!" She wore it attached to her girdle for two days: when asked her reason for this, she replied, "It is in order to offer these good and charitable daughters to God, and that His goodness may bless me together with them." When she was at a loss how to get assistance for the poor convents, she at least wrote to them very often to console them and urge them to enrich themselves with spiritual treasures during their temporal destitution; telling us, that not being able to assist her sisters, she would at least give them the satisfaction of hearing from her. She felt acutely when she perceived that some of our houses were unwilling to assist the others, saying, that nothing afflicted her so much, as seeing a want of mutual charity among the daughters of the Visitation.

But we cannot end our account of her charity towards externs, as well as to the poor convents of our Institute, without referring to her charity in the community; although it is easier to admire than to describe it. She often said, that through her own sufferings, God had led her to compassionate the weak, and that, without the continual illness with which He had favoured her, she should have had no little difficulty in resting

satisfied with the mildness and absence of austerity in which our Blessed Father had established the order; but that God had taught her that nothing could equal the sublimity of charity. She provided for all the wants of her daughters, but especially the sick, having written with her own hand that were there really a reason she would die for them. She used, when any were ill, to visit them the first thing after prime, and used to return once or twice during the day. Whenever any were very ill, no matter how occupied, she would manage to go and wait on them herself; and she expressly ordered the infirmarians to call her when they were asked, no matter at what hour, and to rouse her without any fear, as her greatest repose was to serve her sisters. She said, "When I see that God has made me so robust in my old age, it seems to me that He wishes to employ me in waiting on those who are ill, and, therefore, I visit our infirmary as often as I can." She used to be seen often for a long time together holding the heads of those who were in a fever, and when told that she was over-fatiguing herself, was wont to reply, "No, I am only taking my recreation." She recommended the sick to the infirmarian in a manner which showed the universal charity of her worthy heart, and during her last triennium, when we lost a lay-sister (a novice), she begged the sister-infirmarian to serve her with as much care, and to give her all that she required, just as if she had been one of the most distinguished of our religious; and it was remarked that our Blessed Mother was never more assiduous in waiting on

a sick sister than on this good lay-sister. She was not only careful of the sick, but also of the infirmarians. She desired them, in the morning, to take some refreshment, and ordered them to sleep during the day. She occasionally told our dear sister infirmarian, that she sincerely thanked God for the affection which He had given her to serve the sick, and that if she had sufficient strength she would never have wished to have held any other office. One of our infirm sisters telling her that she was much afflicted at being a burden to our house, being unable to do anything, and having been received without any dowry, our Blessed Mother replied, "Do not, my dear daughter, say so; you are more precious to us than a mountain of gold; it is a great treasure to the houses of God to possess souls who suffer with patience, as you desire to do, and subjects for the exercise of holy charity." One day, while attending one of our sisters, she said, "I have a great desire to do all I can for our sisters, according to my rule, for beyond that I neither wish for nor can do anything."

CHAPTER VII.

OF HER PATIENT CHARITY IN BEARING WITH HER NEIGHBOUR.

From the love of beneficence of our Blessed Mother we must go on to her love of forbearance. God permitted for her sanctification that

occasions of practising it should be as abundant for her as the air she breathed. She had copied with her own hand those words of our Lord: "If you salute your brethren only, what do you more? Do not also the heathens this? Love your enemies; do good to them that hate you." She once said, when obliged to speak, that she did not remember, after she had sacrificed herself to the service of God, ever having returned evil for evil, but that she had a great inclination to overcome evil by good. At another time she thus spoke on the subject of revenge: "I have such a horror of this vice, that I believe I should die through sorrow had I ever done any act through a spirit of revenge; nothing astonishes me more than to think how a Christian heart can have a thought of revenging itself, a thing so irreconcilable with the maxims of the Son of God." Once a person of low life taxed her in exceedingly insulting language, with injustice and false charity. Our Blessed Mother listened with a sweet and humble countenance to everything, and when he had finished, her only reply was, "May God bless you, my child;" then, turning to the sisters who were near her, she said: "Do you see how much this dear neighbour is disturbed; he is created after the image and likeness of God, and we must love him with all our heart; let us go and pray for his intention." Another no less passionate and indiscreet attack was made on our Blessed Mother in the parlour, and the sister who was present said to her: "Indeed, my Mother, it cannot be the intention of the Bishop (our

Blessed Father) that you should suffer such insults." The saint smiled, and said: "Pardon me my dear daughter, his Lordship has taught me to follow that advice of St. Paul, 'My beloved, avenge not yourselves, defend not yourselves; suffer rather that they should do you wrong and injury.'" The next day a near relative of the person who had thus insulted our Blessed Mother, complained of her conduct to the Prince de Nemours. Mgr. De la Roche D'Allery informed her of this complaint, in order that it might be explained to his Royal Highness; but she said to him sweetly: "My dear brother (for she always called him so in holy friendship, for he was a nobleman of great virtue), we must suffer something; if our neighbour did us no harm, how could we bear with him? I am delighted that, being the spouses of Jesus Christ, we are accused, like him, before princes; all the remedy that I shall use will be to communicate for this person." A gentleman who was much annoyed at his sister having become a religious in one of our convents, after doing everything that lay in his power to induce her to return to the world, butwithout success, he addressed our Blessed Mother in the most bitter language, to which she replied with the greatest mildness, which, however, only served to annoy him yet more. Our Blessed Mother, perceiving that she could not calm him by the honey of her words, resolved to adopt another course, and induced the postulant to leave a considerable portion of her property to her brother, saying that everything ought to be

gone to bring back a neighbour into the path of charity; and she also made her give him a pearl chain which she had wished to present to the convent, saying: "Give, my dear daughter, the pearls of the world to the world, in order to lead back your brother to holy charity, which is the precious jewel of Jesus Christ."

While this convent was building, as may be seen in our Foundation, there was so much opposition that even our labourers were stoned. One of our chief opponents was taken exceedingly ill; our Blessed Mother took especial care to take vengeance on him after the manner of the saints, by giving him jellies, barley-gruel, and similar things, not missing one day in sending him something. She said to our sisters: "You see that this good man deserves that we should take every care of him; he has a temptation to feel an aversion towards us which can only be cured by kindness." A gentleman was once exceedingly irritated because a young lady to whom he was paying his addresses, had entered one of our new foundations, and went so far as to present to our Blessed Mother a pasquinade upon herself. She began reading it without knowing what it was; then threw it on the ground, saying: "Sir, I believe you have made a mistake, as this paper is not for us;" but he replied that it was meant for herself, and that he would explain it to her; on which he made use of the most humiliating language that can be imagined. On leaving the parlour, she said to the sister who was present, "Never, I assure you, did I ever hear anything

which pleased me more than the words of this young man; but yet I compassionated him much, seeing him in a state of sin. We must do all we can that our Lord may give us this soul." She prayed so fervently that our Lord granted her request; he was converted, begged pardon with tears, became a religious, and is now a very virtuous priest, and a good director. Another who had written against her to his Sovereign, was obliged to have recourse to her, being in difficulties. She spoke to him as calmly as if he had been one of our greatest friends; forgot nothing in order to render him the service that he required, and would not even allude to what he had done against her and our convent. "Mother," said a sister to her, "you bear with too much." "Come, my daughter," was her reply, "see our beautiful sentence, 'Charity beareth all things; charity endureth all things.'" Some persons, forgetful of their duty, reproached her with having done more harm than good in the institute; to which she replied with great mildness, that it might be true, but that it was against her will and knowledge. Again, a little while before she left this convent, she received a letter from a discontented spirit accusing her of so many things of which she was perfectly innocent, that we could not bear to read it; but she begged us not to omit a word, to read every word distinctly, and for fear that anything should have been omitted, she made us read it over again, listening with such recollection and devotion, that we ceased at

every instant to look at her. When we had finished its perusal, she said to us, "We must be as gentle as we can to gain this soul; there is not one in this institute for whom I would more willingly give my eyes and my life." She had many letters written to give her every satisfaction, and kept her letter to read over, we believe, the reproaches it contained in private; and, although writing was then very difficult to her, she wrote her a note with her own hand, in order that she might see how much she loved her. Our saint often repeated the following words of St. Paul to us: "Bear ye one another's burdens," and added that there was no greater burden which we can bear for our neighbour than his imperfections. She gave us an admirable example of this virtue, and we may even say that we perceived its growth in her soul. She had a song given her in which her conduct was blamed. She made us read it aloud, and listened to it with much pleasure, and then said, "What ought we to do? It is not the way to gain this neighbour to show him his fault; he is not in the proper dispositions for it; it is better for me to bear with it, and it will be as easy for me to do so as it is to go to bed, (for she was then retiring); but let us have recourse to God, I shall communicate for this soul; do you also do something for him." She was very adroit in concealing and bearing with the faults of her neighbour, especially when they were directed against herself. Once when a sister said to her, regarding some trial, "These are, indeed, choice morsels for the sto-

machs of the saints, as they have the heat of charity to digest them;" she replied, "I am not worthy, daughter, to have the food of the saints, but God permits me, for my humiliation, to feel these things; He sees my heart; I ask for no other defence. He well knows that I would sacrifice my life for the benefit of any soul." At another time she said, "For three months have I been patiently endeavouring to gain access to this soul, and all my attentions are misinterpreted; I will not, however, desist, for I am still very far from having pardoned seventy times seven times. Writing to our dear Mother de Blonay on something which had sensibly afflicted her, she said, "You may suppose, my dear mother, that this privation has mortified me; but, O my God, let us accustom ourselves, my beloved mother, to suffer wounds from those who should caress us; let us keep these arrows deep within our hearts, and never surrender them; but let us always do good for evil." Our saint had the greatest dislike to remembering any displeasure caused by our neighbour, and she did everything in her power to induce persons to forgive the insults which they had received. A religious had written to her, saying that another religious was exceedingly cool to her, and that it afflicted her deeply. Our saint replied to her, "My dear daughter, it is not one of the maxims of charity to be overcome by evil; be so exact, I beg of you in following the maxims of the Son of God, that the heat of your cordial charity may thaw the coldness which is in the heart of your sister. A sister once told her that she had been

told that another sister had spoken of a fault which she had committed many years ago. Our saint asked her what resolutions she had made thereupon ; to which she replied, "To endeavour, for the love of our Lord, to conceal the faults, as much as I can, of those who bring up mine." "Ah, my dear child," said our Blessed Mother "you make me young again," and (embracing her affectionately), "May God grant that you, may never change these sentiments, I should, indeed, esteem myself happy, if my death would engrave them on the hearts of all the daughters of the Visitation." Continuing to speak, she said, "We must never be afraid of not taking vengeance on our neighbour ; for God so takes the part of those who are quiet, in order not to hurt those who hurt them, that everything redounds to their glory. A person once asking her pardon for many things he had formerly said against her, the saint replied, "No, I beg you not to think of it ; I know nothing about it, and, by the grace of God I have no memory to recall what has been done to my prejudice. When things are once suffered for God, what have we to do with them again ?" One of our sisters wrote once to our Blessed Mother that she desired to go to another house, because she could not remain with those who had humiliated and opposed her ; whereon she replied, "Lord Jesus, in what school, my dear child, have you been brought up, that you have not yet learned to suffer from your neighbour ? With whom did Jesus Christ live ? Was it not with a thief who murmured at the honours

paid to His Divine Person, humiliating Him so much as to say at a festival, that what was done for him was lost! Was it not with a traitor who sold him for a small sum of money? Oh, my daughter, how ignorant are we in this lesson of bearing with our neighbour? Alas, at the least shadow of contempt and contradiction, we must begin to display our want of charity. O my dear daughter, make use of this consideration, by which I have already cured many others. Where do you wish to dwell for ever? Without doubt, you desire your salvation; the dear soul with whom you are at issue is also hastening to the same goal. Tell me, my dear daughter, how do you think that God will unite you for eternity in one and the same dwelling, if you cannot, for His love, live together during the short moment of your mortal life? Never think of separating from your neighbour, for you would thereby separate yourself from God." Another religious got one of her friends to tell our Blessed Mother, that she could no longer live with a person whom she loved, but to whom she could not resolve to speak. "I shall make her no other reply," said our Saint, "except that you may tell her from me, that if she does not bear with her neighbour, our Lord will say to her at the hour of her death, 'I have loved you with an eternal love, and I still love you, because you are my work, but I cannot see you or speak to you, and therefore we must separate; so depart from me.'" This produced its fruit, as she spoke to a very good soul.

But I should be doing her wrong if, while speaking of her forbearing love, I did not say something also of her punishing love. She was very exact, and even at times seemed somewhat severe in correcting and giving penances. Those things which offended directly against herself, and which were only known to her, she suffered and put up with, endeavouring to correct them by sweetness; but, if anything was done before others, she passed over all particular considerations to think of the general good, and we have often seen her enjoin penances with tears, saying with the deepest feeling, "Would that I might suffer this penance myself, if my doing so would not be injurious to my sisters." She wrote as follows to one of our superiors, "It is true, my daughter, I have a most exceeding love for the maxims which our Blessed Father gave me, that we must bear with our neighbour, even unto foolishness, and since you desire that I should tell you how to understand this, I will tell you how I desire to practise it myself; it is by bearing with ill humours and with certain little troublesome defects in others, which do no harm beyond that of annoying us, little follies, weaknesses, and acts of inconsiderateness which are not noticed, and which affect myself alone; but, my dear daughter, with things which are voluntary, and which disedify others, where there is malice and open obstinacy, our Blessed Father undoubtedly never taught us to bear with them, without endeavouring by every possible means, both of sweetness and of severity, to bring about amend-

ment; and it is true, that I am a little firm in this, because this house is in the habit of sending daughters to other houses; we have sent out four this year, and I do not like that they should say, our Mother of Annecy bears with everything, suffers everything; it would be very prejudicial in our houses. We, who are superiors, must so bear with our daughters, that it be no hindrance to our guiding them to Paradise.

CHAPTER VIII.

HOW SHE PRACTISED THE FOUR CARDINAL VIRTUES.

If the heart of our Blessed Mother was the chariot of love, we may say that it rested on the four wheels of prudence, temperance, justice, and fortitude. Her prudence was supernatural, and deserved to be called wisdom rather than prudence, so heavenly had she made it. She hated the vice of duplicity and artifice, so that the name alone horrified her. Once, a certain sister thought to praise simplicity by speaking against prudence; our Saint said to her, "You must make a distinction, then, and speak of human prudence, for our holy mother, the Church, bids us ask God to teach us the ways of His prudence." Writing once to one of our superiors, she said to her, "In a word, my dear daughter, good superioresses of Mary must be prudent doves, so as to know how to mix one

ounce of prudence with ten pounds of simplicity; the virtues are a chain of honour, of which prudence is one of the links, and if it be taken away, the chain is rendered defective in that place." She also said, "Many blame prudence indiscreetly, and others practise it immoderately; both do wrong." If our Saint blamed these extremes, she avoided them carefully. Her prudence was moderate, and her simplicity singular. Our Blessed Father, speaking of the excellent order in which she arranged all her affairs before leaving the world, said, "She did everything with such admirable prudence, that the rash wisdom of the world could not censure it, and the virtuously prudent had much to praise therein." We may see by all that has been said, and all that has still to be said, how perfect was her prudence, to settle so much business with persons of every rank and condition, and to know how to maintain it.

She was also so regular, that her whole life was a continual practice of temperance. She once said, that wherever she was, and whatever meat was given her, she took care to eat only of one or two dishes, except when it would be remarked. When she was travelling, and our houses wished to supply her more abundantly, she used to beg the superiors only to give her her common portion. During her last years she ate very little, her portion being generally the smallest, and although they gave her every thing that was nourishing and substantial, she would not suffer anything which in the least savoured of delicacy, and only

ate enough to support life, and she occasionally said to us, "You cannot imagine how tedious it is to me to eat and drink, and it would be yet more so, if it were not that I eat without any relish or appetite, and only to obey God."

Justice and equity were natural to her; during her whole life, both in the world and in religion, she had a great desire to render to all their due; she once told us, laughing, that while in the world she only knew one sentence of Holy Writ, "Render to Cæsar, the things that are Cæsar's, and to God, the things that are God's." At the commencement of our Institute, when our Blessed Mother was treating with a lady on some business, our Blessed Father perceived that she would not yield. He said that she was too stiff, to which she replied, "My Lord, I cannot yield where justice is concerned: though it should be against myself, I should still be firm." Our Blessed Father replied, "My mother, you are more just than good; I do not wish you to be so just; you should be more good than just." These words impressed our worthy Mother, and she meditated on them for a long time, and practised them so well as to season her justice with so much goodness, that in her last years it would have been rightly called only a just and amiable benignity. When there was any appearance of disagreement with a neighbour, she begged the sisters who were charged with the management of temporal matters, to be most careful that everything was arranged with charitable equity. When some-

thing was once told her about a neighbour, she examined both sides carefully, and said, "God defend us from superiors who believe everything, for they do much injustice; but may God preserve us still more from unjust inferiors." On many occasions, when our Blessed Mother was wished to be more severe than she thought right, she did all that she could to settle matters, so that every one might be content, and at last, she would say, "Do you see, my sisters, the ancients would have stoned the poor adulteress through justice, but Jesus delivered her through His goodness; this good Saviour came upon earth to associate justice and peace." Oh, how often have we seen her yield through goodness, when she might have compelled by justice. An extern having once stolen something from the convent, our Blessed Mother was asked if she had given it, or if it were a robbery, and she replied, "What, do you think him capable of a robbery? We should be more just in our judgments," and she turned away from the subject, but sending for the accused, she thus spoke to him in private: "Take a lesson from us; we might with all justice make you give back what you have stolen, and thus cause you confusion; but through mercy we shall be satisfied with telling you to confess it. We give you what you have taken, on condition that it will remind you never to wrong your neighbour."

The masons who were building our second house, having been convicted of not having built the walls as they ought to have been done, were

condemned to have them repaired at their own expense, and it was wished to employ other workmen, which would have been a serious injury to the men; our Saint could not bear this rigorous act of justice, alleging that, to her conscience, it seemed 'exceedingly unjust that the servants of God, who ought to practise all the virtues with greater purity than other men, should act thus." She accordingly sent for these poor masons, impressed on them the necessity of doing what was required of them with equity, made them repair the wall, and in order that they might not suffer, gave them a sum of money. Our good Mother de Châtel, who was with her in the parlour, went to the cell of the sister who was her secretary, and made her note down this act of virtue, placing what follows as a heading: "Blessed be God who has given us a mother so worthily just, and so holily good." Our Blessed Mother said that the true rule of christian justice was, "Do to thy neighbour as thou wouldst wish him to do to thee; he who lives not conformably to this, does not live justly, and wrongs his own soul." Our Blessed Father, when speaking of her, said, "I have found at Dijon, what Solomon could scarcely find in Jerusalem,—I have found the 'strong woman' in Madame de Chantal." A volume would be required to describe her fortitude, for her whole life bears testimony to it. We will not recur to the courage with which she left her parents, and passed over her son's body, in obedience to God, who inspired her to leave her family. The perfection of her fortitude may

be judged of by the continual war which the enemy waged against her without gaining the slightest advantage. She was a strong and immoveable rock, which broke the force of all adversities. When she might have been thought to be the weakest, then it was that she was the strongest by the grace of our Lord; strong in prosperity, not yielding to vanity; strong in adversity, without desponding; strong to succour and bear with her neighbour; strong to conquer and humiliate herself; strong to suffer contradictions and censures; strong in not desisting from anything undertaken for the foundations and the welfare of her order; strong against all threats and contradictions, saying, on one critical occasion, "These are only men against us; though hell should join them, still we should not desist from doing the work of God." She was strong to support even with gaiety, a variety and multitude of affairs; in a word, strong in suffering and in acting, in her commencement, in her progress, and in her end; we may even say, that in her old age, the holy fortitude of her heart, her mind, and her love showed itself yet more wonderfully, so that never thinking of herself, she never felt overwhelmed by any enterprise which she saw the will of God and obedience required. The Lord was her strength, therefore she could do all in Him that strengthened her, and gave her power to resist all which was evil, and to do all which was good.

CHAPTER IX.

OF HER PIETY AND ZEAL IN THE DIVINE WORSHIP.

THE reader may have remarked in what has been already said, that from her very childhood, Heaven had bestowed on our Blessed Mother a tender piety both towards God and her neighbour; but we shall only here make mention of the holy things for which our Saint had the profoundest reverence, and the most burning zeal, as she had indeed for everything which was in any way connected with the worship and service of God. She everywhere practised this piety, and took advantage of everything which could advance her in this happy road. She celebrated the festivals of our Lord and of our Blessed Lady with especial attention and devotion. During Advent and Lent, she generally spoke in chapter of the humiliation of the Word in the womb of His Holy Mother, and of the Passion. During these seasons she wished us to be particularly attentive to make the recreations in a more devout manner than at other times; and occasionally told us, with admirable sweetness, that she gave us one half hour to amuse ourselves innocently, but the other she wished us to give to her that she might employ it with us in serious and devout conversation. It was a delightful sight at Christmas, to see with what devotion she sometimes went herself to wrap

the Infant Jesus and to lay Him in the crib of Bethlehem, according to the custom; and she was careful to go there every day to make her acts of adoration. She took great pleasure in our singing Christmas canticles composed by the sisters at the recreations; she was not particular about the rhyme, provided they breathed a devotional spirit; she even liked them to be interspersed with some innocent and recreative thoughts. She had, at the commencement of our Institute, by the order of our Blessed Father, established the custom of singing Christmas canticles in choir, from the feast of the Nativity till the Epiphany, and no matter how occupied, she was very careful in seeing that these hymns were properly sung. Once, perceiving that a sister made a difficulty about singing a troublesome air, our Blessed Mother said to her with great feeling, "Alas! how little devout we are! we see our Lord weep for us, and yet we feel annoyed at having to suffer a little in singing for Him." She delighted in keeping the festival of the Epiphany with devotion, and always made us communicate on that day, in thanksgiving for Jesus Christ having manifested Himself to the Gentiles; on Easter Sunday, as often as she could, she went to make the seven Stations in honour of the seven Apparitions, with the community, and to gain the indulgences. On the feast of the Ascension, she went with the community to the choir a little before twelve, to accompany our Blessed Lord ascending to heaven in triumph, and established the custom of doing

so in our houses. When, on the festival of Pentecost, she had drawn for the gifts with the community, she read in some spiritual book the explanation of the gift which had fallen to her; and having had two years running the gift of piety, she evinced much joy thereat, saying that it was the will of God that she should become very devout, and adding, that we should be sure to be good religious, provided we were truly devout. At the commencement of each year, she carefully placed in her copy of the rules the names of the saints whom she had drawn by lot for her protectors, and when asked why she did so, she said, "In order that on opening this book daily, I may honour my holy protector, kissing his name, and begging him to be truly my protector."

It was wonderful how she found time for all manner of pious actions, even such as were not of obligation. She undertook to go to the novitiate daily, during the Octaves of the Blessed Virgin, with a troop of the younger sisters, to sing the Magnificat before her picture. As far as was in her power, she was never absent from any processions or prayers, even those of simple devotion; and whether such actions of piety were done through devotion or obligation, she would never allow them to be carelessly performed, saying, that we should serve God seriously as God. She never omitted on the festivals, and at the commencement of the year, to distribute to us invitations to the practice of some particular virtue, taking care to note down her

own faults, and to acknowledge them openly at the appointed times. She had these written at the commencement of the year in the assembly room, lest we should forget them; and after having often told us that we were not sufficiently attentive in practising our virtue, she thought the fault deserved to be reproved by our most honoured spiritual father in his annual visit. In fine, our Blessed Mother lost no opportunity of advancing her own soul and those of her daughters in piety and devotion and we may well say, that the zeal of the house of God consumed her. She suffered exceedingly when informed that in certain convents the chief study was not that of devotion, and once said, that she would do everything in her power that here at least we should so apply ourselves to devotion, that everything might breathe of piety and religion.

How great was her zeal in the celebration of the divine offices! She was exceedingly watchful about them, censuring even the smallest faults, as the smallest ceremonies were by her held in veneration. Advanced as she was in age, perceiving that we recited the office too slowly, she exerted herself to keep up the choir, in order to cure us of our fault. How often did she assemble the young sisters in her cell! or go to the novitiate and make us sing before her, singing with us, showing us our faults, and instructing us at length, as if she had nothing else to do. When she visited our convents, her principal care was to see if the divine

office was celebrated with a perfect observance of ceremonial, even singing herself and speaking much to instruct her daughters thoroughly. She told us that at the commencement of our Institute, our Blessed Father had corrected several bad pronunciations which he had observed in her at the office, and having experienced great difficulty in pronouncing them otherwise, she had spent several nights without sleep from her extreme desire to say office well, pronouncing the words with which she had had the difficulty over and over again, until she was used to them. Until her seventieth year, when God called her to sing the praises of His Divine Majesty in heaven, she never failed in officiating at the office on the great festivals of our Lord, our Lady, S. Joseph, S. Augustine, the Dedication of our church, and on the days when the Tenebræ offices were sung, except when she was prevented by illness, or when there was another superior, for then she took her place as the deposed superior; moreover, during the last months of her life, she officiated at our house at Moulins, as being the oldest religious in the house, according to a provision of our Customs, when she has a good voice. Our Saint had so beautiful and sweet a voice, that she inspired all who heard her with devotion. Though the washing of the feet is an exceedingly troublesome ceremony in large communities, because it is necessary so often to kneel and rise, yet our Blessed Mother never dispensed herself from it, in spite

of her advanced age, washing and kissing the feet of the sisters with a devotion visible on her countenance. This same spirit of devotion and reverence was visible in the smallest actions of piety, as when she performed any penance in the refectory, where she usually, on the vigils of the great festivals, prayed aloud with her arms extended in the form of a cross, praying our Lord by the merits of the mystery which the Church celebrated, to pardon the sins of His people, to be merciful to them, to grant us the grace of fidelity to His holy love and to our observances, adding other petitions, which she made briefly but in very fervent, humble, and devout language. She also showed much zeal for the decoration of the altars and the church; there was no office in the house over which she exercised a more vigilant care than that of the sacristy. Her most ordinary work was to make chalice-veils for those of our houses which were in want of them. One summer, notwithstanding her other business, she made a tabernacle veil, a frontal, and a cover for the credence table, which she made of silk and wool; depriving herself of the half hour's sleep which the rule permits us in summer after twelve, because she wished that the altar should be adorned with her work during one of the octaves of the Blessed Virgin. She spent another summer with the curtains and the canopy for the shrine of our Blessed Father, and said with great humility, "I had the honour to mend his clothes while he was alive, and I have now the consolation to orna-

ment his sepulchre." She also spun some violet coloured serge, as an ornament for his oratory, and not only took care of our church, but also of some of the neighbouring parish churches, when she knew that they were in want of anything.

CHAPTER X.

HER DEVOTION TO THE BLESSED SACRAMENT AT MASS, AND AT COMMUNION.

Her devotion and reverence to the Blessed Sacrament of the altar cannot be expressed. She always carried about with her a thanksgiving to our Lord, for having admitted her to a daily participation of His most holy Body. She communicated daily by order of our Blessed Father for thirty-one years; and so far was this from engendering in her either familiarity, contempt, or negligence, that her care, her love, and her devotion, increased daily. She said one day to our dear Mother de Blonay, that she wished much to ask leave to practise daily confession in order to purify herself, as she daily approached the table of angels, but that she had not ventured to do so, as our Blessed Father had ordered her to communicate daily, without commanding her to confess more than twice a week; and that she begged her as her superior to tell her whether she ought to do so every day or not; our dear

Mother de Blonay replied that she thought she ought to follow the course marked out for her by our Blessed Father, and she obeyed her. At first, she was very particular in preparing herself with extraordinary care for Holy Communion, but our Blessed Father afterwards drew up a method for her, by which her soul was continually led to increased simplicity. He gave her also the Exercise of the Holy Communion, which is in our spiritual directory, and which we still have in our Institute. She had a very great devotion in assisting at the holy sacrifice of the mass, and the business must, indeed, have been very pressing which could prevent her hearing two masses on festivals, either in winter or summer. Having been informed that one of our houses was in such great poverty, that mass could only be celebrated on the festivals, as they had not the means to pay a priest, she was much grieved thereat, and immediately forwarded them enough to pay a chaplain for one year, begging them if they were in the same necessity the following year, to inform her of it, that she might again send them money, saying, that the poverty of no house had touched her so much as this, and that she experienced much grief in hearing that the daughters of the Visitation were deprived of assisting daily at the sacrifice of life and love. She thus wrote to one of our sisters who was about to commence a foundation: "I beg of you, my dear daughter, the first thing you do, as soon as you are arrived, to attend to your chapel, and to have mass said every day; if circumstances

will not permit it, and you cannot have it in your house, go and hear it with great modesty at the nearest church ; it is a great support to the soul for the rest of the day, to have been in the morning so near its Saviour really present in the Divine Sacrifice." Writing to a directress, she said, "Before everything else, my dear daughter, let your first care be to teach your novices, to perform, as purely and as perfectly as they can, the exercise of the holy mass and communion ; these two actions are the two most important actions that we can perform. Tell them, that in asking to be received, they have asked to dwell in the house of the Lord, and to dwell in the house where the Blessed Sacrament reposes. This Sacred Presence makes convents the houses of the Lord ; let them weigh this grace in the scales of the sanctuary, let them often meditate on this Blessed Sacrament, in order that in imitation of our good Saviour they may learn to annihilate themselves entirely, and to be willing to live, as He lives, a hidden life ; in fine, animate their love towards Him as much as you can, and please take them all once into the presence of the Blessed Sacrament, to adore Him according to my intention, and to ask His pardon for the bad use I make of so great a grace. She had such a high esteem for the prayers which priests say at mass, that she never wrote to a priest without begging him to remember her in the Holy Sacrifice. Once a Rev. Father of the Oratory having sent her word that he kept his promise of remembering her daily

in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, she said that that promise was more precious to her than if all the kings of the earth had promised to crown her and make her queen of the universe. She had a great reverence for priests, invariably speaking of them with great respect, and when it sometimes happened that her blessing was asked in their presence, she always refused it, unless the priest commanded her to give it, but even then he was obliged to go a little way from her, as she said that it belonged to none to give a blessing when there was a priest present, for that this was due to his dignity. To a young man, who told her one day that he intended to enter the priesthood, she replied, "This is the greatest and worthiest design you could possibly have, but determine not to live as a man if you are going to take on yourself an office more exalted than that of angels. You cannot, without risking your soul, serve both the world and the altar." When informed of any faults committed in choir, or of any restlessness, our Blessed Mother reminded us of the sentiments which we should have in the presence of our Lord, and she had so great a desire that we should behave with religious reverence in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament, that at one time she ordered silence to be kept before the entrance of the choir, to make us more attentive to it. During the octave of Corpus Christi, and always when the Blessed Sacrament was exposed, she used to remain in the choir as long as she could, and our honoured Mother de Blonay having arrived in the

convent in the year 1641, during the octave of Corpus Christi, she was astonished at seeing our Blessed Mother so assiduous in her adoration, and said to her, "My mother, I assure you that it tires me to see you so long on your knees;" but the saint replied, "My Mother, it is your charity for me which tires you, in seeing me kneeling so long, but as for myself I seem not in the slightest degree fatigued, for all the pleasure I find in this life is to spend a little time in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament." Our dear mother also felt no little astonishment that our Blessed Mother, in spite of her weakness of stomach, never failed singing in the choir at communion and benediction, looking out beforehand what was to be sung, in order not to turn over the leaves, and so to follow the observance. She took great delight in answering to the Litany of the Blessed Sacrament. She told us once that she would wish us, if present at her death, to sing to her, and to make her repeat the verses, "Mysterium fidei," and "Manna absconditum." She was very anxious that there should be beautiful flowers in the garden, and that they should be kept to be placed before the Blessed Sacrament. On Sundays and festivals the sisters who had the care of the garden, were wont to give her a bouquet to carry in her hand, but she always sent for the sacristan, and told her to place it on the altar in a vase; and when they gave her another, she sent it to the altar, making her give back the first, which she placed in her cell at the foot of the crucifix, and when

it withered away she had it burnt, lest it should be thrown into the ash pit. She always had some of these bouquets which had withered before the Blessed Sacrament. A sister one day asked her why she did this, to which the saint replied, "My thoughts do not deserve to be told." The sister still urging her, "My daughter, colour and scent are the life of these flowers; I send them before the Blessed Sacrament, where in a short time they wither and die away; I desire to do the like, and that my life, which is gradually passing away, may finish before God, while honouring the Mystery of the holy Church." Another time this sister being much tried with interior sufferings, our Blessed Mother gave her half a withered bouquet, which had been brought to her from before the Blessed Sacrament, and said to her, "My daughter, put this in a piece of paper, and put it on your heart, in reverence for the Blessed Sacrament, I have sometimes been comforted by this remedy." Our saint having heard a canticle sung in honour of the Blessed Sacrament, often had it repeated at the recreation; one day she selected three stanzas to learn by heart, and said that she had awoke five times that night in much pain, having always on her lips the following lines—

> Ah! suprême bonté! cet amoureux repas,
> Me doit anéantir, et je ne le suis pas!

adding that her soul was much confused at receiving her God so often, and not living in conformity with the Divine food with which she was

fed. She often exhorted us to profit by communion, but she did not like to increase the number of general communions in the community, on account of the diversity of dispositions.

CHAPTER XI.

OF HER DEVOTION TO AND CONFIDENCE IN THE BLESSED VIRGIN.

Our Blessed Mother had never known any other mother than the Blessed Virgin, since having lost her mother when a child, she vowed herself, as soon as she arrived at the age of reason, to the Blessed Virgin, to be her daughter, and took her as a mother; and she daily returned thanks to the Blessed Virgin for the favours and aid she had received from her during her youth, as the having been her guide, and having preserved her from many fatal dangers. On her marriage it was a part of her devotion to recommend herself and her family to the Blessed Virgin; and next to the fear of God, she had nothing so much at heart as to bring up her children in devotion to and confidence in this holy Mother. When she was a widow, not being able to become a religious immediately, on account of her children, she erected a convent in her interior, of which the Blessed Virgin was Abbess. She honoured her, listened to her, and followed her direction, and we find, from several letters,

that our Blessed Father advised her always to keep close to her Abbess on Mount Calvary. "Keep strictly, my daughter, the cloister of your convent; do not leave it without the consent of your lady Abbess; obey her in everything, she only wishes you to do all that her Son will tell you." Our Blessed Mother, as a mark of her perpetual servitude to the Blessed Virgin, obliged herself, by a vow, to say her Rosary, that is, the chaplet of six decades, every day, in which she persevered during her whole life, employing in it a good half hour every day. In a severe fit of illness, in which she could not say her office, she begged six of her daughters, after they had said their own Rosary, to add another decade for her intention, in order that by herself, or by another, this rosary might be daily offered, on her part, to the Queen of Heaven. She also said daily the little rosary of twelve Ave Marias; and she gave general permission to those who wished to say it, provided it was not considered as obligatory, and gave no occasion for scruple when it was not said. When our Blessed Father told her that he intended to make use of her in erecting a congregation, he told her that he had thought of calling it the Congregation of St. Martha, and when he wrote to her about it, he used to say, "St. Martha, our dear mistress." Although she had a great devotion to this saintly hostess of our Lord, her heart felt a little resistance at not being entirely under the protection of the Blessed Virgin; yet she said nothing, keeping herself so abso-

lutely under obedience that she made no account of her own thoughts; but she prayed much to God to discover his will to our Blessed Father, who, one morning when she least thought of it, came to her to tell her that God had made him change his opinion, and that we should be called the Nuns of the Visitation; that he selected this mystery because it was a hidden mystery, and was not celebrated in the Church, solemnly, like the others, but that at least it should be so in our congregation; this gave great joy to our Blessed Mother. She so impressed on our first sisters devotion to the Blessed Virgin, and spoke so often of her to the sick whom she went to visit, that, by general consent, both of the children and of the people, we were called the Religious of Mary, a name by which we have ever since been known. When the festivals of the Blessed Virgin were at hand, our Blessed Mother was wont to urge us at the chapters and recreations to celebrate them very devoutly. Few feasts of our Lady passed without her having canticles sung in her honour at the recreation. She often joined the novices and other sisters on the greater feasts, in singing before a picture of the Blessed Virgin, either the "Magnificat" or "Ave Maria Stella," having a great devotion to repeating three times the verse, "Monstra te esse Matrem." She willingly made novenas and processions in her honour, for public or other necessities; and she recommended directresses, above all things, to inculcate devotion in their novices to the Mother of God. She

showed an inexpressible affection to the Feast of the Immaculate Conception, above all the other feasts of the Blessed Virgin, and laboured most earnestly to induce the Bishop of Geneva to make it a festival of obligation in his diocese. Finding that she could not succeed, she humbly and earnestly besought our honoured spiritual Father (the Dean of Notre Dame) to celebrate it solemnly in his church, which he promised to do; and our saint told us, with great glee: "Our good Dean has rejoiced me greatly, for he has told me that though he should be obliged himself to ring the great bell of Nôtre Dame, he would have it tolled for the Festival of the Immaculate Conception as for the other feasts." She thus concluded her letter to a very reverend Abbot: "I have, my very dear brother, one favour to ask of you: it is that you would be pleased to grant me, that in your abbey, and the priories that depend upon it, you will have the Immaculate Conception of the Mother of God kept with the same solemnity as the other festivals of our Lady, and have sermons preached to excite the people to revere this holy prerogative. I should, indeed, be happy were I called on to give my life in support of it." A sister once asked her permission to say the Rosary of the Conception nine days before and after the festival, whereupon she also resolved to join in these two novenas, and to make them at other times also, when she should have time. Often, during her trials, she would say: "Let us have recourse to our Lady;" and, during her retreat of 1640, she dictated to

a sister, on her knees before her crucifix, the following prayer to our Blessed Lady, to beg her aid in her interior sufferings: "Remember, O most merciful Virgin, that no one has ever had recourse to thee, without experiencing the effects of thy goodness; O Virgin of Virgins, I present myself before thee, earnestly desiring that thou wouldst deign to regard my interior misery, and thus regarding it, O Virgin full of goodness, to use thy maternal authority with thy divine Son, and to prevail on Him to vouchsafe me, not deliverance from my sufferings, unless such be His will, but grace to live in His fear; and to do with me according to His eternal pleasure, to which, through thy hands, I sacrifice myself anew, in union with the sacrifice which thou didst make of thyself on the day of thy Immaculate Conception, for which I desire for ever to bless the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. Amen." She spent some time in the composition of this prayer, not wishing to put into it any but the most disinterested language; when the sister had given her the fair copy, she said, putting it in her bosom, "I should very much like to say this prayer for nine months; I shall ask permission from the Dean the first time that I see him." The sister said: "My mother, can you not do this of yourself?" She replied; "If one of our sisters wished to offer any daily prayers, she would ask my permission; is it not, then, right that I should ask that of my superior; it is possible that the Blessed Virgin may only listen

to me because I shall speak to her by obedience." We have been told by our spiritual Father that our saint asked him to grant her this permission, telling him, with great simplicity, that it was for some interior trials; about which he was unwilling to question her on account of the great respect in which he held her. One year, while she was in retreat, three sisters happened to be looking for her at the same time to ask her for certain permissions; they found her with her arms crossed before the image of the Blessed Virgin, and, instead of giving the sisters the permissions they asked of her to practise some corporal austerities, she ordered them to pray every day for a quarter of an hour before an image of our Lady during the time of their annual retreat, and taking a little book from her sleeve, which she had written with her own hand, containing the litanies of the Blessed Virgin in French, she said to them: "See, my daughters, how we have everything in Mary, and with what confidence and care we should have recourse to her; if we are children, she is our Mother; if we are weak, she is strong and powerful; if we stand in need of grace, she is the Mother of Divine grace; if we are ignorant, she is the Seat of Wisdom; if we are in sorrow, she is the Cause of our joy, and of that of the whole earth; and in this way she went through the whole litany; after which she sent away the sisters, begging of them to pray earnestly for her to the Blessed Virgin. One of the sisters replied to her, "What prayer must we make?" "My daughter," said she,

"our prayers are agreeable to the Blessed Virgin when we praise God for the greatness which he has bestowed on her, and for the choice he has made of her to be his worthy and true Mother.

She was also, as a consequence of her devotion to the Blessed Virgin, very devout to her chaste spouse, St. Joseph; thus we found in her writings, that when she spoke of him to our Blessed Father, she called him "that dear saint whom our heart loves." She entered, and made us enter, into the Association of St. Joseph; and she was particular that, on the second Sunday of every month, the holy communion and a procession should be made in honour of this great saint. She had a small picture of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, which she always carried about with her; showing it to us once, she said: "Every day, when I commence our reading, I kiss the feet of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, but because the figure of the devil is painted under their feet, and I cannot kiss them without kissing that horrid beast, I shall request the Dean to allow me to brush it over with a little paint, to efface him who wishes to efface us from the book of life." She prayed daily without fail before the picture of St. Joseph, which is above the altar of the chapter. On the eve of the day she left to go to Piedmont (in 1638), a sister waited until she had finished this devotion, and begged her to tell her what prayers she said daily before this picture, in order that during her absence she might say them daily in her

place. Our saint testified great joy on hearing this, and said to her; "Come here, then, my daughter, for me, I beseech you; I say a Laudate Dominum omnes gentes, an Ave Maria, and a Gloria Patri, to return thanks to the Eternal Trinity for all the graces and privileges which have been given to the terrestrial Trinity, not that I make new acts every day, but I have made them once for all, do you do the same." The last visit our saint made to the convent at Thonon, she begged a sister to give her a copy of a hymn which had been composed in honour of St. Joseph, and to bring it her when she should be getting into the carriage; she did so, and our saint thanked her, adding, that she wished to travel with this great saint. She once said that she wished, in the circular letter which she desired to send, though she did not actually send it, to request all the superiors to order that their nuns should each of them always carry about them a picture of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, and one of our Blessed Father, for, said she, "It seems to me very desirable always to have our good friends with us." Once, seeing a picture of the Blessed Virgin on an altar in one of the oratories of the house, she remarked; "When Jesus, Mary, and Joseph are not on an altar, I do not find there all that I want." Some of our sisters having written to our saint to inquire if they might lend their church to the associates of St. Joseph to preach there on the second Sundays of the month, and to perform the functions of the confraternity, she replied in the affirmative,

and that they ought to think themselves highly favoured in their Church being selected to honour him whom God had so honoured, but that they should request the Priors of the Association to choose their hours, so that as much as possible they might be able to say their office at the time ordered by the constitution. Oftentimes, when we were speaking of devotion to the Blessed Virgin, St. Joseph, and the saints, our Blessed Mother taught us that the devotion most agreeable to them was imitation, and that the Blessed Virgin and the saints were more pleased at an act of humility, bearing with our neighbour, and self-renunciation being made in imitation of them, than with long vocal prayers in their honour.

CHAPTER XII.

OF HER DEVOTION TO HER GUARDIAN ANGEL AND TO THE SAINTS.

As we have already said, our Blessed Mother had a special devotion to the apostles, martyrs, and those great saints of the first centuries who planted and supported the faith by their blood and their labours. She composed a litany to these holy protectors, invoking them occasionally one after another, though she ordinarily did so rather virtually than actually. She declared that she did not like that under pretext of

union with God, devotion to the saints should be neglected, that we ought to honour them at least by a general intention, and that, though there were seasons when the soul could not act nor have any other remembrance than that of God alone, there was always, not only a sufficient liberty, but a great necessity to have recourse to the saints.

One of our superioresses having written to our Blessed Mother that she had a novice, so drawn to the simple contemplation of God alone, that she could not even invoke the saints at her morning prayers; our saint replied, that the devil had a hand in it; that the novice should be thoroughly examined, and taught that however favourable the king may be to us, there are always times and circumstances in which we are obliged to apply to the officers of the crown: "We have," added she, "a sister, led by one of the simplest ways, and purified in everything, both in imagination and in act; but I do not omit to make her gain indulgences and pray to the saints; and if I desired her to recite every morning the long prayer to all the saints, she would do it. Order this novice sometimes to say the Litanies of the saints; if she cannot do it, look on her as a suspected person; put her in the hands of some learned person, and let her be thoroughly tried." Her advice was followed, and it was discovered, that as this novice had not been long converted, the devil gave her this absorption in false contemplation, in order to keep her in the error

that it was wrong to invoke the saints. Our Blessed Mother said to us on this subject, "I assure you, I dared not say anything more than advise them to examine and interrogate this novice: but I felt in my heart that her soul had not been thoroughly cleansed from the leaven of the heretics." It is very remarkable, that when our Blessed Mother had this feeling and gave her first answer, she was not aware that this novice had ever been of the reformed religion. She ordered them to make her recite daily, through the whole of her novitiate, the Litany of the saints; by this means she was entirely cured of this wound, and became a very devout religious. As we have already said, in the first exercises which our Blessed Father gave our Saint, he instructed her to make a visit to the Church triumphant every morning; she preserved this practice her whole life, and daily after her morning prayer, repeated the following prayer from the Breviary?

Sancta Maria, et omnes Sancti intercedite pro nobis ad Dominum, ut nos mereamur ab eo adjuvari, et salvari, qui vivit et regnat in sæcula sæculorum. Amen.

She had written out with her own hand, in her little book, prayers to S. John the Baptist, and S. John the Evangelist, to SS. Francis of Assisi and of Paul, and one little one to S. Bernard, who was her favourite saint, and whose writings she took great delight in reading, especially where he treats of the Blessed Virgin, and his sermons on the Canticle of Canticles. She

had them half bound in order to use them more easily, and ordered us always to keep in the chapter a volume containing all the works of S. Bernard, in order that on the festivals and other days, during the time allotted to reading, the sisters who wished might go and read there, saying, that although she greatly honoured every kind of pious book, yet that she found a special pleasure and advantage in reading the Lives of the Saints, or the works of the Saints, as this reading excites the heart to imitate and invoke them, and prayer solicits the saints to assist us. Our Saint was wont, when the Life of any Saint was read at table, to speak of him or her at recreation with so much honour and love, that one would have said that she loved no other saint but that one with so special a devotion; so that we were wont to tell her, with the confidence which her saintly charity gave us, that she must have great credit with the heavenly court, since she had so many acquaintances and good friends there, to which she replied briefly and with great humility.

Her devotion to her guardian angel induced her to have pasted on the door of each cell a picture of the guardian angel, in order that the sisters on entering and leaving their cells might remember to salute him. She instructed us in her *Replies*, often to consult our guardian angels as to what we ought to do in various occasions, and to ask their pardon if we failed. She said that we ought, by the continual presence of God, to resemble our guardian angel, in having

always present to us by faith the face of our Heavenly Father, whom he sees face to face. In one of her journeys, she said to her companion, "My daughter, let us accustom ourselves on entering our houses, to salute the angels who have the care of them, and on leaving to receive their benediction, and to recommend to them these dear communities." She often sang the following verses of the Royal Psalmist, and had them written in her little book :—

Angelis suis mandavit de te, ut custodiant te in omnibus viis tuis.	He hath given His angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways.
In manibus portabunt te, ne forte offendas ad lapidem pedem tuum.	In their hands they shall bear thee up, lest perhaps thou dash thy foot against a stone.

We shall speak, in another place, of the incomparable devotion which our Blessed Mother bore to our Blessed Father, an affective and effective devotion which caused it to be beautifully said, that the life of our Blessed Mother was a faithful copy of the life of our Blessed Father.

CHAPTER XIII.

OF HER LOVE FOR POVERTY.

I treat of the poverty of our Blessed Mother next to her piety and devotion, because I have been told by a holy religious that the soul which

is thoroughly divested of everything, and which sets no value on the things of this world, makes a very pure prayer. The desire of perfectly imitating our Lord made our Blessed Mother leave her country, her house, and her wealth, to become poor, in imitation of our Lord; and the commencement of our congregation was made in such perfect poverty that it cannot be expressed: so that our Blessed Mother's poverty was truly from choice, and purely voluntary, and yet necessary, for she had no other possessions, and, following the guidance of love, had voluntarily let herself be led into this state of poverty. Before the congregation had taken the solemn vows, our Blessed Mother made, as we have said above, a private vow of poverty in the hands of our Blessed Father, and she was wont to say that when she thought of the vow of poverty, she could have trembled with fear, so easy did she see it to be, to commit faults against it; and she was so afraid of breaking it, that she was continually on her guard. She had at one time a watch, some relics, and other similar things which may be lawfully kept by a superior, but she had a scruple about them, and distrusted herself so much in everything, that she would never have anything more in her cell than the other sisters; she was even careful from time to time to examine her cell, lest the sister who slept there to assist her in her wants, on account of her great age, should have anything superfluous; and occasionally finding that she was keeping by her two clean white handkerchiefs, as she was often

afflicted with a cold, our Blessed Mother used to take them to the sister-laundress, saying: "My sister Jane Theresa is never satisfied unless there is something kept in reserve, while for myself, I desire that for me as for the rest, whatever may be necessary should be taken from the common wardrobe." This dear sister had some cushions and towels for the use of our Blessed Mother when she was ill; but on perceiving this she had them all carried to the infirmary, desiring that the infirmarian should give her all that she wanted as to the rest. She also remarked that her clothes were kept in a private chest; she was much mortified at this, and made them carry them to the wardrobe, begging the sister, for the love of God, to satisfy her so far as to allow her to have everything in common with the rest. She occasionally said that she had much consolation in thinking that she was more particularly clothed and fed by alms, because the Archbishop of Bourges, her brother, allowed her a pension, and because a portion of her clothes was sent her from our convent She delighted in wearing them, all patched and old, "provided," said she, "they are clean." She requested the wardrobe sister to allow her to continue to wear a veil which had already fourteen or fifteen patches. She usually used what she began with until it was worn out. One of our superioresses having asked her if she ought to condescend to a religious who had asked to have a new winter habit every two years, under the pretext that the habits are warmer when new:

our Blessed Mother replied: "Lord Jesus, my dear daughter, what you have told me about sister N., has scandalized me exceedingly; be careful, my dear daughter, not to allow new habits to be made in this way, and be very firm about this; if she be cold, let them give her a good tunic. I assure you that I have now worn the winter habit which the sisters of Dijon gave me for eight years; and I have never yet thought that it was not sufficiently warm; and I hope, if my life is spared, to wear it yet for two or three years more. I am truly ashamed at seeing nuns vowed to poverty taking so much care about their clothes. Alas! how differently do the true servants of God live! I read yesterday that the great S. Paul was content with having enough to appease his hunger and to cover his nakedness. Alas, how far are we from this spirit of perfect poverty! Endeavour to impress this on the hearts of your subjects, and do not allow them to be careful of themselves, nor anticipate what is necessary for them; this is contrary to the vows and the rule." When our saint saw a sister with her habit well patched, she said: "That pleases me much, because it savours of a true religious." She ordered the superiors, in her *Replies*, to be very attentive in making the sisters observe the vow of poverty, and to give them every opportunity of practising it. She was wont to say that we should affectionately and reverentially kiss our old and mended habits; she was seen to do this herself; she wore the same winter habit for eleven

years, of which she spoke above, and would not have changed it, had she not been obliged on going to the foundation at Turin, to wear a robe similar to those worn by the sisters of the foundation.

Once the wardrobe keeper wanting a pair of slippers for a sister who was ill, she gave her the pair which our Blessed Mother had worn, purposing to make her new ones. On her perceiving it she had new ones made for the sister and took back the old ones, saying, "My daughter, it is but right that I who teach others that each should wear out what she has commenced, unless it pleases the superior by her authority to change it, should follow the same rule myself." Thus she wore the same slippers throughout the whole winter, although she was much inconvenienced thereby, as she afterwards admitted that her slippers were too small. When she left for her last journey to France, she would not allow any new habits to be made for her, and on the eve of her departure she asked for pieces to mend her tunic, which was torn; she basted the pieces in herself, and then taking them to the wardrobe-keeper, begged her to sew them, showing her how well it did, and adding, that she thought herself quite fine when she had anything that savoured of poverty. At the time of our foundation at Turin, visiting some houses for her religious, the Marquis de Lullin desired her Royal Highness, who was present, to observe the splendour of the foundress of the order; her shoes had two or three patches

on the top, and were tied with strings of leather. This great princess was exceedingly edified and esteemed her all the more. She was ever on the watch to practise poverty; she had so small a fire in her cell in the winter that it could scarcely warm her. I speak of the fire in her own cell, when she had one to herself, which our dear Mother de Châtel made her take, for until the age of sixty she had always slept in the dormitory, in a small cell like the rest; she never had more than one lamp except when she wrote in the evening, and though for a wick it had only three threads of cotton, or two if the cotton was thick, she used to say; "I delight in seeing this little light, it savours so much of poverty." While she slept in the dormitory, she very seldom lighted the lamp in her cell, but opened the door and used the common lamp. Madame de Toulonjon, her daughter, wished to make her a habit of Milan serge, as she was travelling with one which was very heavy for the summer; but our Blessed Mother would not hear of it, and said to her: "Why, my dear child, if I wore a habit of Milan serge, however light the stuff, I should be so weighed down by it, as to have no repose until I had left it off; the poor should feel the effects of poverty." One of our sisters having learned to bleed, a case of instruments, of which the lancets were mounted with a little silver, was offered her; but our Blessed Mother would not allow her to accept it; and because the sister who had offered her the present, was a superior of one of our houses, when she came to this convent on busi-

ness, our Blessed Mother took that opportunity of instructing her by telling the sister in her presence, that the very desire of having these presents would deserve a good penance; adding; "Remember, my child, all your life, where silver will answer as well, not to use gold; and where pewter will be equally useful, not to use silver; and where lead will do, not to use pewter; for the true daughter of the Visitation should not look for rich, polished, or elegant things, but for those which are common, substantial, and simply necessary.

CHAPTER XIV.

OF HER LOVE FOR POVERTY CONTINUED.

She looked on the habit of working continually as a true practice of religious poverty; and she always practised it most faithfully, even in the parlour, except when the conversation turned on very spiritual matters: she then left off working to be more attentive, as also, when she spoke to strangers, or to persons of high rank or dignity, At the end of every month she always wished either to see the work of each Religious, or that they should tell her how they had employed their time. She held those religious in high esteem who made good use of their time; and sometimes told us that wealthy ladies in the world were ordinarily idle, but that the servants of God ought to regard themselves as poor in His

house, and consequently should love work. The love which our Saint had for holy religious poverty made her dislike to make rich presents to the wealthy, alleging that it did not become poor religious to give presents to the great ones of the world, unless it might be some little appropriate article of piety and devotion, to mark the respect felt for them; and that we must keep what we have to distribute to the poor in their necessities.

Our saint having been informed that one of our superiors had given some presents of considerable value to a Bishop, she wrote to her as follows: "I have been told, my dear daughter, that you have given a present of great value to your bishop; I must tell you, in all simplicity, that this action of yours has displeased me, as being altogether opposed to religious humility and poverty; not that I disapprove of presents being occasionally given to persons to whom we are indebted, but it must be in accordance with what is laid down in our *Coutumier*. If you desired to give a present to his lordship, you might have made a beautiful chalice veil for his chapel, or a handsome mitre; these may be easily made by ourselves, but jewellery, my dear daughter, are presents fit for the royal family; it must not then be done again; your house has not yet a revenue of its own, and there are many who are poor in the institute, in whose favour alms would be well employed; in a word, my dear daughter, believe me, it behoves us to mortify our nature thoroughly, which is

averse to every thing that humiliates ; let it be shewn by our humility that we are poor, and that consequently we are unable to give rich presents to the wealthy, unless it be some object of devotion, as such ought to be our whole wealth ; for the rest, let us keep ourselves little, and eat our bread with the poor of Jesus Christ ; such are the friends with whom we shall have to do in the eternal tabernacles. Oh ! how rich will the poor be there !" A community of our institute once sent a ring to our good mother as a present to the late Bishop of Geneva, because he was the brother of our Blessed Father, and this ring having been given by a postulant, had not been purchased by the house ; she however returned it, excusing herself sweetly for not doing what had been requested of her, because she thought that as the ring was valuable, she would contravene religious simplicity and poverty by this present. Our Blessed Mother read the letters from our poor convents with great care and visible pleasure ; and she sometimes said to us, "My God, how happy are these nuns, to have such an opportunity of practising their vows ! I invariably remark that the poor convents always abound in devotion, joy, and goodness." She encouraged them by her letters to enrich themselves with this heavenly poverty, and often repeated to them the counsel she had laid down in her *Replies*, that the superiors who were in poor houses should speak but to few of their poverty, and then only to those who might assist them ; "For," said she, "we never complain of

that which we love." When she perceived any of our poor convents dislike begging with importunity, and taking a delight in working to gain their livelihood, she kept them in her heart, and would, when writing to others, speak of them as an example, saying that it was a beautiful sight to see the spouses of God like those who were truly poor, working in imitation of the great apostle, to obtain their livelihood. She begged the superiors of our poor convents, if their petitions for assistance were somewhat roughly refused, to rejoice at it with a double joy, as it was a precious consequence of their poverty, to be rejected. She wrote as follows to a superior before setting out on her last journey to France. "I conjure you, my dear daughter, to correspond with your poverty in all the extent of this grace; teach your subjects to delight in seeing their sacristy, their dormitory, their wardrobe, their refectory, all displaying poverty; be careful of entering into useless expenses or embellishments in your house; humbly use what you have for the support of your sisters."

Our worthy mother was wont to say that she was delighted in finding, from the letters that she received, that the generality of our houses were poor, since there were only one or two houses completely finished and endowed. She wrote to our poorest convents, that the care with which our dear sisters of Crémieux concealed their poverty from the world, and worked hard for their livelihood, thus adhering to the designs of God, who left them poor, had drawn

down upon them the blessing of heaven ; that this convent had been insensibly raised from its extreme poverty, and their building had been in great part finished, because they had sought first the kingdom of God and His justice, the rest having been added unto them over and above. She once wrote to a Jesuit father, "We never complain of poverty, it is the most valuable treasure that a servant of God can possess." It appeared to her that two of our houses, which were not in a position to make foundations, might begin to practise the following article of the Constitutions, "When a convent is finished and endowed, novices ought to be received from charity." She notified this to them in the most forcible manner, and wrote also to their spiritual father about it, entreating him to be upon his guard, and to remember that an abundance of worldly goods would be very much opposed to that perfection of soul to which the daughters of the Visitation are called ; and she had great consolation, as she said in her *Replies*, in the fact that in that point this house had anticipated the rule, having received a considerable number of novices gratuitously. I remember that in the year 1640, our Blessed Mother wrote three or four letters to our sisters of Crémieux, begging them to receive a pious young woman of Burgundy, who had no money. She told them that she made this request with joined hands, and if I am not mistaken, the following words were in one of her letters. "Imagine, my daughter, that I am on my knees before you,

and asking you with joined hands to admit this young person." The good superioress of Crémieux wrote to her, that her humility had drawn tears from their eyes, and that she had succeeded in obtaining permission to receive this Postulant; at this our Blessed Mother expressed great joy, and she wrote a letter of thanks to our sisters in very affectionate terms, and told them that this young woman would be among them the daughter of the Blessed Virgin, and a loadstone to draw down on their house the blessings of heaven. We have spoken above of the poverty which our Blessed Mother practised in the Foundations, especially at those of Bourges and Paris. She said upon this subject that she felt great delight in not being over busy or manifesting her poverty, and added, "We allowed this new new rose tree to grow quietly with the thorns of many urgent wants, which hurt us indeed, but gave us great hopes that the roses would be all the more beautiful."

When our Blessed Mother was travelling, and was obliged to lodge in secular houses, she was always put, through motives of respect, into the best room; and was occasionally told that she was put into the room where the king had slept, and that she had the same furniture as had been used by his majesty, which displeased her exceedingly. In the evening she carefully rolled up the silk counterpanes, and covered herself with her clothes, saying to her companion, "Let us, for the love of God, rise early to-morrow morning and leave all this worldly luxury." She

showed much more satisfaction in sleeping in miserable lodgings, on straw or leaves, as she was occasionally obliged to do, than in large tapestried rooms and downy beds. Notwithstanding her age and her delicate constitution, she never allowed them to carry a bed for her, nor to have a sumpter-horse, but only a small box put in the litter for her books, papers, and a little linen for a change, for she said that good religious should, like St. Paul, be content with what they find. She often said that the greatest trial she had had since she had been in religion, was to submit to her superiors, who had her treated somewhat differently from the rest, on account of her great age and delicacy of health, as well as her infirmities, and the great labour she had to undergo. When she changed superiors, to show that she regarded herself as a poor and simple religious, who wished to possess nothing without permission, she showed them whatever she had for her own use, and when our honoured Mother de Blonay, her last superior, arrived, she showed her even her protestations of faith, and the prayers which she carried about with her, in a little bag round her neck, asking permission to keep them, and a small picture of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, which she always kept in her *Constitutions*, and taking out the drawer of her table, she showed her that she had nothing but a small piece of green taffety, which she sometimes used as a shade for her eyes. In her visits to our houses, they often gave her a prie-Dieu with cushions

in the choir, but she would never use it. "Take it away, my sisters," she was wont to say, "where is your poverty?" She always knelt on the bare floor. Two years before her blessed death, her age rendering her very weak, so that she could scarcely rise when she had been sitting on the floor in choir, it was wished to give her a down cushion, but she would not hear of it, and only consented to use a small cushion of coarse black cloth stuffed with straw. I believe we have above related, when speaking of her charity to her neighbour, how she not only loved poverty, but also the poor, and how she patiently listened to their complaints, doing them all the good she could. When at the end of the seasons, she inspected the dresses and shoes which the sisters returned, she desired the officials to keep for her all that they could for the poor, without, however, prejudicing the interests of the community. She also desired that the shoes that were given them should be mended. If she had been allowed, she would have once given, in the depth of winter, her own tunic to a poor woman. Generally before the Presentation of our Lady, the day on which we renew our vows, our Blessed Mother was wont to urge the sisters to see if they had anything more than was necessary for use, and she used then to visit all the cells, to see if there was anything superfluous in them. She had such a dislike, that those who had made a vow of poverty, should have the least unnecessary thing, that when, in consequence of her great age, she was unable to

sew, she returned to the sister who had the care of the work, the needles which were in her pincushion, and we know for a certainty, that she felt a scruple at the end of her life for having kept more pins than she wanted in her cushion.

CHAPTER XV.

OF HER LOVE FOR OBEDIENCE.

S. John Climacus esteemed him great who renounced gold and silver; but he regarded him as a saint who divested himself of his own will. We, therefore, according to his words, must esteem our Blessed Mother as both great and saintly, for she renounced nothing so fully, so absolutely, and so perfectly as herself, and her own will. This truth may be remarked in the whole of her life and actions; and besides, she was shown from Heaven, as we have said above, that she was destined to be a victim sacrificed by perfect observance. Oh! how much did her desire to be directed make her sigh and weep before the Divine Majesty to obtain a director; and when, by an innocent mistake, she had placed herself under a director who was not the one to whom God had given his light to direct her, with what fidelity did she obey him, against all her own ideas, and interior attraits. But when Heaven had placed her under the guidance

of our holy Father, what language can express the perfection of her religious obedience, to which she had bound herself by vow? Our Blessed Father said that, among all the multitude of souls who were under his direction and followed his advice, he had never met with one who equalled our Blessed Mother in the perfection of obedience. I believe that I have forgotten to say in its proper place, that in the second journey which our Blessed Mother made to Savoy, to consult our Blessed Father on the state of her soul, he had appointed the day when he would meet her at Sales, where he would wait for her. Now it happened that, on account of some pressing business, she was obliged to delay her departure for two days later than she had expected. Having started on horseback, she made very long days' journeys, to make up for lost time, and finding that it would be impossible, notwithstanding all her haste, to arrive at the appointed day, she travelled all one night, although it was raining in torrents, with a heavy thunder-storm. Our Blessed Father was delighted at this act of obedience, and asking her why she had so fatigued herself, she answered him; "I did not think that it would have been right for me to use any pretext, to exempt myself from what you had ordered, about arriving here to day." The Saint then told her how much he desired liberty of spirit in her obedience, and that she ought rather to love obedience than to fear disobedience; and rather to consider the mildness of his intentions than the rigour of his words,

on such occasions. Once our Blessed Father, speaking of the virtue of obedience, said to her, "You have never disobeyed me in anything whatever, except in your condescension to our two first daughters," (of which we have spoken above,) upon which our Blessed Mother threw herself on her knees, with abundance of tears, exclaiming that she had been shipwrecked at the very entrance of the harbour. Our Blessed Father raised her up and consoled her, admiring how acutely this soul felt for the slightest fault against obedience. Not satisfied with writing on her heart the counsels which she received from our Blessed Father, she also put them down in writing, and made extracts in her little book of the principal points of his letters, in order to have them always before her eyes, and to direct her exterior, and still more her interior, by obedience. We know that by an unheard-of obedience, she begged our Blessed Father to command her spirit, that it might not wander in prayer; the following words are found in the handwriting of them both. She says; "I am not mistress of my mind, which, without my permission, desires to see and manage everything, and therefore I ask my dear lord for the assistance of holy obedience to stop this miserable runagate, for I think it will respect a positive command." Our Blessed Father thus wrote to her: "Dear soul, why do you wish to play the part of Martha in your prayer, since God has shown you that it is His desire that you should keep to that of Mary? I command you, then, simply to remain

in God, or near God, without endeavouring to do anything, and without making any inquiry of Him, unless He move you to do so. Do not, in any way, return upon yourself, but remain near Him." Is not this truly a perfection of obedience? Her guardian angel would have to tell us with what perfection she practised this command.

Our Saint was always, not only in the hands of our Blessed Father, but of her other superiors, like the faithful servant of the gospel, going and coming to many different places, as obedience ordered her; and where obstacles from men opposed her, her obedience found its sport in overcoming them all. Once when it was feared that sovereign authority would be employed to retain her, if she went to found one of our houses in a certain town, she said with great firmness, that as for that, they need not think of it; that nothing could keep her out of Annecy but obedience, and that if a tower were built expressly to confine her, if her superior commanded her to return, she believed that God would give her sufficient strength and energy to break through the walls, and execute the obedience. In all her journeys she never desired her own will to have any part in them, but simply that superiors should have been led to see the necessity of commanding her to go, being perfectly indifferent to all that was ordered her, without endeavouring in the slightest degree to influence their determination, either for or against. When she was returning from Lorraine, hearing that the

Bishop of Geneva was being written to, to induce her to go to Paris, and fearing that he would leave it to herself to do as she pleased, she anticipated him, and humbly begged his lordship to order her expressly to do as it seemed good to him, and not to leave it to her own determination. Having been sent to spend several weeks in some of our convents, the late Bishop of Geneva asked her what her heart said on the subject of this journey. She replied, "My lord, I have not consulted it, and had I done so, it could give me no other answer than that I ought to obey." In her last journey to France, where she left her precious life, words would be wanting to express her utter self-abnegation. She wrote to our most worthy Madame de Montmorency, saying that she should indeed be delighted to see her, but that she could not say a single word about it, and could only do whatever was commanded her, and our dear sister, Marie-Hélène de Châtelus, then superioress at Moulins, having begged her to point out to the Bishop of Geneva the necessity of her making this journey, our Blessed Mother replied by excusing herself, as she did not wish to prejudice the judgment of her superiors, adding, "I assure you, my very dear daughter, that I have an infinite desire to employ the little time that remains of my life in the practice of holy obedience." While travelling she often looked at her obedience, that she might perform it in every respect with the greatest exactness. In this last journey, our Blessed Mother's compa-

nion, our dear sister Jane Theresa Picoteau, wrote from Paris to our honoured Mother de Blonay, that she conjured her to abstain from requesting our Blessed Mother to shorten her stay as much as she could, for that, looking on her as her superior, she feared to stop ever so little a while against her intention. Our Blessed Mother wrote in this same journey to our honoured Mother as follows: "My very dear and very good Mother, tell me plainly what you wish, and believe me that if obedience wishes me to leave Paris and return to Annecy, I will do so in spite of the winter, although my work is not completed, for thank God I wish to attach myself only to obedience."

The love, honour, and respect which our Saint bore to her superiors cannot be expressed. She had an inexpressible desire that the Institute should have a most religious reverence for the Bishops, our true and legitimate superiors. She had an exceeding submission and confidence in our very honoured spiritual father, which made her free in writing to him on many little occasions. She said that she was especially thankful to our Lord for having given her so good and kind a superior, that she could have recourse to him in everything which was in any way unusual, and that thus she lived with more tranquillity under obedience. Her religious respect was extended also to her superioresses, to whom she paid the greatest deference and respect, and after she had been deposed, it might have been thought that she had never com-

manded, so perfectly did she know how to obey. Wishing for no other liberty but that which is found in obedience, she carefully asked permission for everything which she wished to do. When our very dear and good Mother de Châtel was elected superior in this convent, our Saint earnestly begged her to exercise her in the virtue of obedience, telling her that she had been so long accustomed to command others, that she was apprehensive that she did not possess that virtue which makes true religious. She said to her at the same time, "My dear mother, here are several letters to which I ought to reply, order me then to reply to this one to-day, and to that to-morrow, and thus give me matter in which to obey you." She invented other little ways of inducing them to command her; and she so deeply valued all that her superior told her, that she wrote down all that she said, and always carried about with her some advice which our very honoured Mother de Châtel had given her at her earnest entreaty. When our very honoured Mother de Blonay had arrived here, our Saint, after having given her a faithful account of her interior, and particularly of all that had passed since the decease of our very dear Mother de Châtel, begged her, in the most earnest manner, to direct her according to the light which God should vouchsafe to her for her welfare. Before leaving for Moulins, she gave her a short sketch of the present state of her interior, beseeching her to give her a rule which she might observe during her journey; she

besought her also to give her the book which she might judge to be the best adapted for her, looking on herself, absent as well as present, as under her direction and guidance. Our dear Mother satisfied her wishes, at which our Saint evinced much pleasure, saying that that was truly what she needed. On leaving the house, she wished our dear Mother to give her her blessing. She asked her for it with love, and received her refusal with humility, saying, "Well, my dear Mother, I shall receive it in spirit." Our Saint was exceedingly desirous that our Congregation should profess a very perfect obedience. She often spoke of this virtue, and frequently recommended our sisters the superioresses, to ground their subjects well in the practice of obedience, in the manner which the constitutions pointed out. She once wrote thus to one of them: "Make your daughters become more and more perfectly obedient. We are endeavouring to establish our novices well in this virtue, and I think that if I wished them to go to heaven they would go there, and if I wished them to go into the centre of the earth they would do so." One of our dear sisters of Autun wrote to our Blessed Mother, saying that it had been left to her choice to return to Moulins, where she was professed, or to remain at Autun, and that she did not know what to do about it; that having sacrificed her whole soul to obedience, she had no longer any judgment to decide for herself, or to make a choice, being equally ready to go or to come. Our Saint kissed this letter

several times, saying, "May God bless this dear sister, who has no will of her own; if she performed miracles I would most readily believe them." She wrote to her, urging her to persevere in her self-denial, saying that whoever has been vowed to obedience, and afterwards concerns herself about herself, her employment, her abode, or her direction, retracts her vow, and after having died for God, miserably rises again by self-love, to live in herself. In a word, our Saint might well boast of her victories, for she was most obedient at all times and in all conditions, in the world, and as a religious, as a superior, and as a subject, in health, and in sickness, in her travels and in the house, in little and great things, in her interior as well as her exterior, for others and for herself, in life and in death; for when asked what should be done with her body after her death, she replied that she had no orders to give about it, and that she was under obedience to her superiors, and the convent of Annecy; and when the Duchess de Montmorency requested her to leave her companion, our dear sister Jane Teresa, at Moulins, she replied that she had no authority to order, and that permission must be obtained from the superior of Annecy, where she had made her profession.

CHAPTER XVI.

OF HER LOVE FOR PURITY.

I KNOW not what to say on this third vow, save what our Blessed Father has written; "That the virginity of this holy widow, repaired by humility, was more excellent than a less humble virginity, and that she truly merited to be associated with that honourable body of holy widows, worthy of being honoured as the temple of God. While she was a maiden and a wife, possessing the most attractive beauty and grace, her innocence, her modesty, and the majesty of her countenance kept the most licentious in awe. As soon as she became a widow, her heart became a garden closed by the sacred vow of chastity, and surrounded by the hedge of thorns of mortifications and exercises of virtue." Our Blessed Father said that she was a tower of ivory, so fit was she to make of her chaste heart the throne of the peaceful Solomon. When left a widow, young and beautiful, she renounced everything that could flatter the senses; the mere mention of a second marriage was a horror to her. All her friendships were frank, simple, and sincere, but holy and without familiarity. She had engraved deeply in her heart, and carried it written in her little book, that the Blessed Virgin, the Abbess of her interior convent, of which we have already

spoken, feared, seeing an angel in human form, because he praised her. After her example, she would have feared a man, though he had appeared in angelic form, if he had praised and caressed her. She had got our Blessed Father to write for her the marks, whereby to discern false friendship from real, and had this sentence impressed on her heart: "The friendship of this world is enmity with God." Speaking once in confidence with our very honoured Mother Faber, she said that she never remembered having had to say a word in confession touching chastity, and that she humbled herself in thus perceiving her own weakness; and that without doubt had she been strong, God would have permitted her to have been attacked by this temptation as well as by others; that she compassionated those souls who were tempted by it, and that she was especially careful to pray for them, and to aid and console them. She confirmed the same thing in the account which she gave to our very honoured Mother de Blonay, before her departure for Moulins, telling her that she had been attacked with all kinds of temptations, except those against purity. She once said that the cell, retirement, mortification, and prayer are the great safe-guards of the chaste soul, and that the true religious ought not to look at the pleasures of the world, of whatever sort they be, except behind the cross of their Spouse; that is to say, with an eye of contempt. She ordered that those who were tried by temptations of impurity should speak of them but little,

and that they should not particularise any of their trials, save with their confessor, and that only when they had any scruple. Whenever there were any counsels about chastity in the reading at table, she always had them passed over, saying that these things ought never to be read in common, but only in private, by those who were in want of them. She once said to a sister who spoke to her of her trials on this subject, "My daughter, take to yourself the wings of the dove, and fly for refuge to the corner stone, to the wounds of Jesus Christ, and remain there in tranquillity, without a look, without a dispute, without replying a word to your enemy." She never spoke much on such temptations, but with the most admirable clearness of mind said in four or five words all that the soul who consulted her had need of. Her incomparable purity of heart appeared in the perfect neatness and propriety of her external appearance, and of all that she did. She had so expelled from her heart human love by divine, that she seemed to be altogether of a spiritual nature, being purified from all that was not purely divine, and we may declare that we have seen this Blessed Mother living and breathing for her Heavenly Spouse alone, not only in all honesty and purity, but in all sanctity of mind, words, behaviour, and action, which made her conversation immaculate and truly angelic.

CHAPTER XVII.

OF HER LOVE FOR HUMILITY.

The Rev. Father Binet, of the Society of Jesus, having seen our Blessed Mother at Paris in 1619, bear long-continued contempt and humiliation with sweetness and constancy, he said that he believed that she had been professed with four vows, and that the fourth was humility, enquiring if that vow was not made in our congregation. "My dear Father," replied our Blessed Mother, with a sweet smile, "it is my desire that we should practise humility as exactly as if we had vowed it; knowing this, we join this precious virtue to those of the three vows." A soul which has been endowed with the grace of God in an eminent degree for many years, and which leads a life corresponding to what it has received from His Divine Majesty, wrote once to our very good Mother de Châtel, in reply to a question which she had asked of her, as follows: "For more than twenty years that God has made me to know our very worthy Mother de Chantal, His goodness has always made me see, both by intellectual vision and by experience, that He had especially and from the beginning chosen her to be in this age, a mirror and clear representation of the hidden life of Jesus Christ; and to speak to you sincerely, my very dear Mother, beseeching

you, however, not to mention my name, having rendered myself unworthy of the grace of God, the first time that I heard of the order of Mary, I was powerfully drawn to pray for its progress, and after holy communion Jesus Christ made me see that when He uttered those sublime words, 'Learn of Me, because I am meek and humble of heart,' He had looked with a glance of especial love and election on our Mother de Chantal, whom I then saw in spirit with Jesus Christ made man, in an abyss of humility, hidden in God." Let us see how our Saint corresponded with this regard and election of God by her most holy humility. Whence came that great and longing desire, from the time of her widowhood, to be instructed and guided by another in the spiritual life and in virtue, but from a genuine and virtuous distrust of herself? The following are her own words: "After God had deprived me of Monsieur de Chantal, and I had consecrated myself to His Goodness, I conceived great regret in my soul for the vanity in which I had let my days run by in the world; it seemed to me as if this evil had happened me because I had been the mistress of my own actions. In my great desire to have a director, I said to our Lord, with abundance of tears, 'My God, I who am so ignorant, shall be certain to err if I am not instructed, and my soul weaker than weakness itself, will fall from bad to worse, unless Thy Majesty give me a master and support.'"

Our Blessed Mother was naturally very high-spirited and imperious, and it was necessary that

the power of grace should subdue that which came from nature, ; and, indeed, it cost her much. God taught her at the very commencement of her widowhood, to subject herself to all creatures for His love. He humbled her so as to make her become the servant of the servant of the house, in the house of her father-in-law, rather than his daughter. She had no authority whatever, her actions were continually under espionage and continually censured, her words misunderstood and misinterpreted, her good works criticised, and her most indifferent actions blamed ; in a word, as a good Father Capuchin, named Matthias, said, she made there a longer, more humiliating, and more mortifying novitiate than she would have done in the most rigorous orders of the Church. Our Blessed Father, as a prudent director, seconding the designs of the Holy Spirit upon this great soul, kept her always in the pure way of humility, and desired that her chief object should be to root her heart well in this virtue. At first he taught her that the Christian widow is the little violet in the garden of the Church, a lowly flower, which has nothing in it striking, neither colour, nor scent, but which is all sweetness, lowliness, and modesty. He told her that having lost her husband she had lost her crown, and that having lost her virginity she had lost her glory, so that nothing now remained to her but lowliness and abjection ; and he ordered her to exercise herself not in pompous and showy virtues, but in those which were suited to her widowhood, which he said were humility, con-

tempt of the world and of herself, simplicity, love of abjection, the service of the poor and the sick; and he assigned her as her dwelling-place the foot of the cross, telling her that it should be her glory to be despised, and that she should reckon as her crown her misery, her littleness, and her abjection. Some very spiritual persons seeing this holy widow endowed with such high dispositions for the interior life, wished to urge her on, but our Blessed Father said to her, "No, no, be content with spinning the threads of the little virtues of humility, sweetness, mortification, simplicity, and others which are suitable to widows; he who tells you otherwise deceives and is deceived." This great director desired that our Blessed Mother should be so submissive to his direction, and so entirely self-subdued, that once when she had written to him respecting certain somewhat ardent desires which she had, he answered her, God willed nothing more of her than that she should be submissive in everything. "Leave to me," said he, "the conduct of your desires, I will take great care of them, and do you have no anxiety on the subject; moreover, I shall never give them back to you, and it would not be expedient that I should do so, but be assured that I shall make no bad use of them, having to render an account of them to God." Was it possible to find a soul more submissive and more utterly divested of self than she was, since her director governed her desires, and, as we have said above, commanded her very thoughts? She kept herself thus lowly, little, and humble, like a little child,

holding the hand of him who guided her in the name of God, without so much as asking, "Where are you leading me?" She said rather with the ardent St. Paul, in that spirit of holy blind submission; "What wilt thou have me do?" God having regarded the humility of His servant, and having made her the honoured mother of so many daughters, she wished to appear rather a disciple than a mistress in the sublime lesson of humility, and she wrote as follows to our Blessed Father; "I ask my dear lord's assistance for the honour of God to humble myself. I desire to be most exact in never saying anything whence glory or esteem may redound to me." Our Blessed Father wrote these words in reply, on the same piece of paper: "Doubtless he who speaks little of himself does extremely well, for whether our words be to accuse, to praise, or to abase ourselves, we shall see that they will only serve as a bait to vanity."

Every one knows how much the Institute is indebted to our Blessed Mother, nevertheless she was ever anxious to persuade us that she had no share either in its commencement or foundation, and often said that it was not right to do such a dishonour to so flourishing a Congregation as to call her its foundress, and that it had but one founder, our Blessed Father; and wherever she found herself called foundress she effaced the word. We know that when the depositions for the canonization of our Blessed Father were taken, she took the pains of reading them carefully through, however badly written,

that she might erase the title of foundress which she feared they might have applied to herself. She would never accept any other title, either in the contracts or in the process for the beatification, save those of humble and devout mother. Although our Blessed Father had given her full and entire power to establish or abolish in the Institute whatever she thought fit, telling her that she was mistress of the family, and could order what she liked, yet she used this power with such humble modesty, that she told us she had never ventured to establish anything in the Institute, unless she had first received the order to do so from our Blessed Father, and therefore she always carried a memorandum book with her, to write down those things which circumstances showed ought to be established, in order to speak of them to our holy founder, and after his decease she felt a scruple in establishing anything, unless her conscience dictated to her that such was the will of our Blessed Father. As we expressed our astonishment, she said; "What then, is it right for servants in a house to do anything beyond that which is according to the orders and wishes of their master?" thus showing that she only regarded herself as the servant of the Institute. This she explained with great simplicity, saying that in the first years of the Institute when there were many foundations, she was like servants of all work in harvest time: the father of the family says to them, "Come here, go there, return to that field, go into that other." But when these poor peasants become old, they are only fit for

spinning, and cannot help at times saying to the children, whose father they have outlived, "Your father did not do so; your father wished that it should be done in such and such a way;" then applying her comparison to herself, she said, "At the commencement, as being the servant of the Institute, our Blessed Father said to me, 'Go and found at Lyons, go and found at Grenoble; return to go to Bourges, leave Bourges to go to Paris, leave Paris and return to Dijon.'" "Thus was I for several years doing nothing but going and coming, at one time in one of the fields, at another in another, of this dear father of the family; now I am only a poor old creature of sixty-five (this was her age at that time) it seems as if I was no longer of any service to the Institute, unless it may be a little to tell the intentions of its Father." She added that she had never had any thought which pleased her more than this. She especially honoured our older Mothers and sisters, and would not call them daughters, regarding them as her companions, but our Blessed Father commanded her to do so, and our Blessed Mother, writing on this subject to our very dear Sister Françoise Marguerite Favrot, said to her, "I find at the conclusion of your letter that you are jealous at my calling our sisters superioresses, daughters, and not you; O my God, my very dear sister, you would wish me, then, to call you my daughter; I will do so willingly to obey you, with the same tender affection as the rest. It was through respect that I abstained from doing so, and I wished to do

the same with our first mothers, but in consequence of their earnest entreaties, our Blessed Father commanded me to do it. Your humility in desiring it will increase my respect, and in calling you my dear daughter, I shall honour you with all my heart as my very dear sister and my very honoured Mother." She wrote also as follows to our Sister and Mother Claude Agnes de la Roche: "My advanced age allows me now more easily to call those daughters, whose mother I clearly see I neither am nor deserve to be; but as I am their eldest sister, and they have lost their father, they desire to call me mother. O my God! may they make me such, and not be ashamed at having me as their servant; surely, my dear daughter, I should indeed be presumptuous, seeing the little good I have done in the congregation, if I desired any other position than that of servant, and a very useless one too."

CHAPTER XVIII.

OF HER LOVE FOR HUMILITY, CONTINUED.

After our Blessed Father's decease, the Chapter of this house of Annecy, fearing that the humility of our Blessed Mother would induce her to resign her position, elected her Superior general in the hands of M. de Sales, cousin to our Blessed Father, Provost of the cathedral church of Geneva,

and our spiritual Father. But our Blessed Mother renounced in full Chapter this election, and could not be induced to accept it, declaring that she would never act as superior upon such a title, though assured by the elder sisters and by the Provost that our Blessed Father had declared it to be his intention that, during her life, this house, which is the mother-house of the Institute, should have no other superior than her, and that, as its Superior, she should be the common Mother of all. She replied that her conscience told her that if our Blessed Father had been alive, he would have approved of her acting thus, and she adhered to her resolution with such persevering humility, that they were obliged to yield to her, and the election was made for the triennium.

Consequently, at the termination of her third year, she sent her resignation in writing from Pont-en-Lorraine, where she had gone for a foundation, and she had gained over the late Bishop of Geneva, to put a stop, by an absolute order, to the opposition of the Chapter. They then proceeded to the election of another superior, who was, as we have said above, our very honoured Mother de Châtel, and afterwards our Blessed Mother was elected every three years, and not only would never remain superior longer than the *Coutumier* permitted, but at this last election, when she might have been again elected for three years, she would not suffer it, giving strong reasons for her refusal. She told us sometimes, that besides her total incapacity to guide others, she was very happy in having this opportunity, by being alto-

gether deposed, of doing away with an error which had insinuated itself into most of the houses of the Institute, that those were in some way to be censured, who only remained three years in the office of superior.

From the moment that our Blessed Mother was deposed, without desiring either exemption or privilege, she took the last rank, bowing and paying all other little honours, not only to the Superioresses, but to the Assistants while they were in office. She was very attentive in assisting at the Chapters, and accusing herself; it was in vain to put hindrances in her way, or to give her occupations, for she always found means of escaping from them, in order to humble herself, which annoyed our very honoured Mother de Blonay exceedingly, as she did not like seeing this venerable saint in the lowest place, humbling herself before her. She used to try and manage that at the hour of the Chapter our Blessed Mother should be wanted in the parlour, but she soon found means to disengage herself, which made our very dear Mother once, at the end of recreation, hold the Chapter without ringing the obedience, thinking thus to take her by surprise; but it was in vain, as she suspected the trick, and leaving the company in the parlour, went to the Chapter. Our dear Mother perceiving it, requested her to withdraw, saying that the Chapter had commenced, that for that time it was not necessary for her to come, but that she might do so the Saturday following; the saint obeyed, and retired, but with a heart so truly touched with

grief at not having been permitted to practise these exterior acts of humility, that she wept most bitterly; she then went to spend the remainder of the time of the Chapter with a sick sister in the infirmary, to whose prayers she recommended herself most earnestly, adding that it was a just punishment of God that she had been prevented from humbling herself like the others, and that, as unworthy to be with the community, she was separated from it; and she said this with such tears and sobs that she had never been seen to weep so bitterly, and both her sick sister and the infirmarian cried in sympathy with her; after Chapter, she begged our dear Mother's pardon, throwing herself on her knees before her, for having replied too much to her, in order to be allowed to accuse herself, begging her to humble her, and give her a penance for this fault. This was a common practice of hers, and I can assert that I never saw her weep bitterly, except when praised, or when refused permission to practise acts of humility, as the last in the house. As long as her strength allowed her, she served in her turn in the refectory like the others, and washed the dishes, and fearing that she might not be called in her turn, she watched the turns, and would occasionally go out of her turn. She would never dispense herself from sweeping, according to the list that was posted up, except when ill; and even on the eve of her departure for Moulins, on her last journey, she swept. She was accustomed to collect the dust with feathers bound together, but with such care and time in order to do it

well, that a sister who was waiting for her at the gate with some letters of consequence, said to her, "My mother, it seems as if your charity were finding pearls, you gather up the dust so carefully." The Saint answered her with an unutterably serene and recollected countenance: "I am gathering up more than that, my daughter, and if we only knew what eternity was, we should think more of gathering up dust in the house of God, than pearls in the house of the world." The sister immediately wrote down these words so truly religious, so fearful was she of losing a syllable of them. She not only practised humility on ordinary occasions, but received with open arms every opportunity of humiliation; these never failed her, and she once said, that she had a subject for rejoicing and humbling herself, inasmuch as she knew no superioress in the order who was so much censured as herself, and when she was told that, being Mother of all, she must bear the whole weight, she said, "I did not mean it in that sense, but only that I do wrong more than the rest." One of our good Mothers, the superioress of Nantes, Marie Constance Bressand, wrote to our Blessed Mother in all confidence, that there were many who censured her for allowing herself to be called *worthy* Mother; she received this notice with great joy, saying that the censurers were perfectly right, and thanked the good mother heartily for her sincerity. But with incomparable simplicity she declared that when she had had things written she had never paid attention as to whether she was called worthy or not, which pro-

ceeded from her great indifference to the things of this world, and her continual attention to God. A few weeks after this she received letters from others, which were anything but civil, telling her that it gave great disedification, that she allowed herself to be called worthy mother, and that she should efface this word in the writings of the Institute. This truly worthy Mother read this letter with still greater pleasure, because it was very humiliating, and made us write to all the Communities of the Institute, beseeching them not to call her so any more. She also took the trouble to have read to her the lives of our deceased mothers and sisters, as well as the Book of Foundations, in order to efface this word *worthy*, ordering the sister who wrote them not to use the word again, telling her that common sense might have warned her, seeing that it was a shame to call her worthy, who was so unworthy. One of our superioresses wrote to her, through an excessive simplicity and confidence, saying that she thought that age had made her relax in that mortification which had formerly appeared in her. Our Saint made us read this letter, three or four at a time, one after another ; she also told the community that it was but too true that she had relaxed in her attention to her little acts of mortification, and that she wished to profit by this advice, thanking her who had given it her, with words full of tenderness, gratitude, and love. On several occasions, when our Blessed Mother or her relatives had been spoken ill of in the most cutting language, she never appeared to

notice it, and told several that were in her confidence, that this contempt and abjection had been so very useful for her interior, that if she had not feared to confuse those who had rendered her this good office, she would have thanked them for it on bended knees; these were her own words, and she added that she had done so in the sight of God, and had said, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do; by these words," added she, "I meant, they did not know the good which this little contempt had done me." She was often known to suffer insults and reproaches without making known her innocence, saying, "We must bless God for everything, and not excuse ourselves." M. du Péron, a very great servant of God, speaking to us of the sweetness with which he had seen this Blessed Mother support a humiliation, which was perhaps the severest she had ever suffered, related to us that she had never spoken to those who were the cause of it, but with words of honour, esteem, and affection; and that her countenance had appeared so joyful, that he could not look on her without admiration.

The love of contempt in our worthy foundress was followed by a mortal hatred of all praise, which she did not oppose by a multitude of words of humility, but contented herself with three or four spoken so truly from the heart, while her eyes swam with tears, that it was impossible for any one to go on. She acknowledged once to our very dear Mother de Châtel, that after her interior pains she suffered from nothing more severely than from praise, through the clear view

which she had that God alone deserves to be praised. She often recommended us never to praise any one in his presence, nor during his life, because we could not tell what might be his end. She added, also, that God had reserved judgment, glory, and vengeance for Himself, and she occasionally spoke for a length of time on these words to the community. Giving once a definition of what it was to be a daughter of the Visitation, she said, "To be a true daughter of the Visitation, is to esteem contempt, and to contemn honour." She added, that humility was the key of the treasures of God, that if the soul presents herself before Him without this key, she will obtain none of the treasure in the eternal coffers, but will be always wretched and poor. She once wrote to a superioress of our Institute, that apart from solid humility there were nothing but shadows and mere phantoms of virtue. She often recommended humility in her letters and speeches, but only true humility, which makes us love to be reputed and treated as that which we know ourselves to be before God. She would not read the funeral oration on her brother, the late Archbishop of Bourges, because her relatives were praised, and she said to me, "If you find anything devout, tell me when you have read it, but for the rest, I do not wish to hear of it." God, who does the will of those who love Him, satisfied the desire of His humble servant, and permitted that she should die in the pure practice of humility, having no office in the order, and holding the last place and last rank; but all that we can say

of the humility of our Blessed Mother cannot equal the praise given her in three or four words by our spiritual father, "that the excellence of the humility of this holy soul consisted in concealing her humility."

CHAPTER XIX.

OF THE SWEETNESS AND HUMILITY OF HER GOVERNMENT.

These two dear virtues of sweetness and humility were the points on which the whole government of our Blessed Mother always turned. She wrote at various times to some newly elected superioresses, who dreaded the burden of the superiority, that if they were humble they would be sufficiently strong. Among other things she wrote to one of them in the last months of her life, that if a dry stick had the power of humbling and annihilating itself before God, and was elected as superior, God would rather give it sense and intelligence than disdain to govern well by means of it, and that superiors would never be deficient in governing unless they were deficient in humility. When she wrote to the superioresses and sisters who were going to found, she invariably recommended them to establish their government in humility, and said that, like foundation stones, they ought to place themselves so low, by humility, that they would not be able to find them-

selves again in order to ascend. "Blessed are the souls," she wrote to one of our sisters, "who descend so low in the abyss of humility, that they lose sight of the earth. God blesses such souls in their government and their enterprises." We may say that the general and private government over her Institute of our Blessed Mother was rather carried on by sweetness and humility than by authority. She never undertook any thing concerning our houses except after prayer, and paid the most absolute deference to our Prelates and spiritual fathers. A person of consideration urged her once to command one of our superioresses to do something which he greatly desired, but the Saint replied; "Three things hinder me from doing what you request; first, because it would be a mockery for me to command where I have only a right to obey," (she was then deposed;) "secondly, that I having now no legitimate power to order, our sisters would be under no obligation to obey; thirdly, that the thing being reasonable, doubtless as soon as we shall have requested our sisters they will comply with our request." The Rev. Father Binet wrote to her once, that they were spreading a report that she desired to withdraw our sisters from the service of the Magdalenes, to which she replied as follows: "With respect to the coldness conceived for me, as your reverence informs me, by several persons of rank, who imagine that I desire to withdraw our sisters from this charity, in truth, my dearest father, I embrace the abjection of it with all my heart, though in reality I have not even so

much as thought of it. In the first place, my rashness does not go so far as to presume that I should have the authority to do it even if I wished it, nor should I even wish to have it; when, therefore, my opinion is asked on such points, I make it known with all candour; if it is not followed, I am not offended, my dearest father, and should in truth be very wrong if I were offended. If our sisters write to me for my opinion, I ask our Lord about it with as much simplicity as I can, and if His goodness deigns to hear me, and to give me light about His holy will, I answer them, according to the perfect union and confidence which God has wrought among us, leaving them, however, as is but reasonable, entire liberty to act as they please, for, my very dear father, I cannot and ought not to act otherwise with our houses, and should indeed be throwing myself open to censure from superiors were I to do so." In these words we have a faithful and simple account of the manner in which our Saint behaved towards the Institute.

Some one wrote to her another time, saying that she was much censured for not having arranged for the appointment of a superioress-general after her death, since she herself performed the functions of one, to which she replied; "My very dear daughter, you may tell Jesus Christ that I have written to you, that if I have done any actions which have looked like a superioress-general, they have originated in my pride, and the natural quickness of my temper, for I never thought of being superioress-

general, and if I had such an idea, and wished to act as such, I should wish to be everywhere pointed at as vain and void of the spirit of truth. It is true that the Institute applies to me, because I have nearly always been superior of this house of Annecy, to which all the convents have as much right to apply as children to their parents, and assuredly if I have ever been particular about any thing, it has been to behave to those houses which address themselves to us, in a spirit of meek and humble charity, and without any other power than that of cordial prayer." When our Saint visited our houses, she would never do anything that might savour of superiority, not even sit in the choir in the seat of the superior, nor recite the Benedicite or the grace. If she had anything to say to the whole community, she caused the sisters to assemble somewhere else than in the Chapter, which she would not hold, nor did she ever do so except when she was superior. While at Moulins, during the latter part of her life, where there was no superioress, because she had not accepted the office, as we have already said, she left it to the assistant to perform all the offices of superior, not even giving benediction at the end of Complin, and the sister assistant having pronounced the words without presuming to make the sign of the cross over the sisters in her presence, she said to her, "What, my dear daughter, have you then deprived me of so great a benefit; I beseech you not to do so again, for every one should discharge her own office, and it is for you and not me to perform the functions of superior.

When our Blessed Mother perceived anything in a house that ought to be corrected, she corrected it with a frankness truly humble, maternal, and generous, and when informed of any faults, she never hesitated in writing about them without the slightest flattery, but with all sincerity and cordiality, pointing out the evil, and showing the remedy with admirable ingenuity, always appealing to superiors with a respectful and submissive deference; and when matters required it, she wrote herself to the Prelates with such filial humility, confidence, and that they generally gave her full power in the convents under their jurisdiction; a power which she used with great modesty and deference. The more she advanced in age and in perfection, the more gentle became her government, and in the last year of her life she said to our very honoured Mother de Blonay, "My very dear Mother, I have veered and turned to every side that can be imagined, I have considered and tried every mode of government, and after all I have seen that that of mildness, humility, sincerity, and patient forbearance is the best, and the one which the superiors of the Visitation should keep to." She also wrote as follows to one of our superioresses, "Be firm, my dear daughter, in your observance, but be more rigid to yourself than to others; I do not say this only as regards your bodily infirmities, for in this respect you should be charitable to yourself, otherwise you will give great anxiety to your daughters; but I mean it with regard to regularity, and the little miseries

of the soul; the longer I live the more do I see that sweetness is requisite both for finding an entrance into hearts, and for abiding there, in order that they may do their duty towards God; and, in fine, our religious are the sheep of our Lord, and therefore we are allowed, while leading them, to touch them with the rod of correction, but not to shear or flay them, or lead them to the slaughter-house, for that belongs only to the Sovereign Master."

It was also one of our Saint's chief maxims in her government, not to render the yoke of religion heavy by loading her subjects with new obediences, for she said, that a religious had enough to do in obeying her rule; that the yoke of religion is light because God makes us love it; but that inasmuch as it is a yoke, it captivates and brings nature into subjection; that superiors ought always to keep up the courage of their subjects, in order that they may bear this yoke without wearying of it all their lives. She was wont to say also, that while a nun obeyed her rule, it was necessary sometimes to exercise her, in order to to make her advance more and more in perfection, but without harshness, and in the spirit of sweet charity and loving zeal. As for those who failed in observance, she desired that they should be led themselves to ask penances for their faults, and counselled that light penances should be given when they really humbled themselves, inasmuch as the repentance of a contrite heart is great, when it perceives that it is treated with kindness. Never in giving a penance or correction did she

use words of contempt or of reproach, or that in any way expressed disdain; and she well knew how to cure a fault, and yet comfort the defaulter. She was wont to say that one of her greatest trials while superior, was the obligation of correcting and giving penances, which she nevertheless regarded as one of the solid parts of the preservation of religion. The Prelate, in one of our convents, had ordered a sister to drink only water for a few days; our Saint believing that the weak health of this sister would suffer thereby, obtained permission to mitigate the penance, which she did, by secretly putting some white wine in her water-bottle, in order that the community, who had witnessed her faults, might not perceive that her penance had been dispensed. She had incredible patience in bearing with weak souls. It would be difficult to decide which most predominated in her government, a gravity altogether holy and full of majesty, which cut off all effeminacy, loss of time, and reflections of self-love, or a maternal kindness, which rendered her affable, amiable, and compassionate towards the infirm in mind and body. She anticipated their wants with charity, listened to them with patience, spoke to them with charitable sweetness, and assisted them with humble perseverance. We should not, she was wont to say, put those who are at all cowardly all at once at the head of the army, for fear of their being alarmed, nor show them all their wounds, for fear of their believing them to be incurable, but we should sweetly teach them to walk, as did the great Apostle, who acted

like a tender nurse among her children. She showed a generous and active charity in her care for the bodily succour of her daughters, and showed them an affection truly maternal, which made people marvel how she could attend to such little things when she had so much to do; but she was yet more constantly and cordially solicitous and indefatigable for their spiritual welfare; it was her principal object, and when she saw a soul progressing in solid virtue, and in the interior life, she had a special zeal in urging them to good, saying that such willing subjects only required their path to be made clear for them, and their affections to be enkindled; and that for every little assistance which was given them, they advanced very far in perfection.

Writing to a newly elected superioress, she gave her the following advice: "Your office, my very dear daughter, is that of a mother of a family; apply yourself with a holy zeal to the care of your household, which is twofold, both temporal and spiritual. Let your government as regards the former, be generous and humble, neither niggardly nor splendid; be on your guard lest your house be involved in debt, for this gives great anxiety and subject for complaint to those who succeed you; if you are poor, go on in sweetness and humility. As to spiritual affairs, let your vigilance be continual yet sweet. Make your subjects as devout as you possibly can, for on this depends their good, for if they take pleasure in conversing with God, they will be very retired and mortified. Be not like those mothers who dare not punish their

children, nor, on the other hand, like those impetuous ones who are ever making them cry. Do not flatter self-love, and induce your daughters to leave the care of themselves to you. You must know, my very dear daughter, that your sisters will not all make the same flight towards perfection; some will soar very high, others will fly low, others again will take a middle course; serve each one according to her capacity. There are certain good but little souls of whom one must not expect more than to see them go on their little way in the path of observance, without pressing them, for that would only make them fall and embarrass them with bitterness and disgust: others have great dispositions, and these it is necessary to urge on to the true virtue of humility and divestment of self, but with sweetness and great constancy, and not to spare them. If your government be praised, humble yourself before God, duly referring the glory to Him alone; if you be blamed, humble yourself with the knowledge that nothing can produce nothing, and ever bear it in mind, as a certain truth, my dear daughter, that you will do great things with the grace of God if you are humble, sweet, generous, and devout."

CHAPTER XX.

HOW SHE DESPISED EVERYTHING WHICH SAVOURED OF WORLDLY VANITY.

In life and death our Blessed Mother recommended to us the love of humility, and to avoid as deadly poison everything which savoured of the world, or which would give us credit in its eyes. She was once told that one of our superioresses had a fine mind, that her convent was superior to every other in the province, that she was spoken of in all the higher circles of society, in a word, that her house was quite the vogue. Our Blessed Mother was sensibly touched by this, and only replied as follows: "I am never so much pleased about our houses as when I hear that humility, devotion, and love of solitude reign in them, and that their spirit shines only in simplicity, poverty, and contempt of the things of this world." She inculcated upon us most carefully, that we should always keep ourselves little and humble before all other religious orders, and she spoke of it very strongly in her *Replies*. Writing to one of our superioresses, who complained of the underhand opposition made by some other religious to our foundation in a certain town, in order that they might establish their own house more easily, our Blessed Mother said to her, "It is true that wherever the good religious mentioned by you can

oppose us they do so, but let us only oppose their power by our weakness; if they wish to found at ——, and people wish for them there, let them do so, and do not oppose them; is it not reasonable that they should have the precedence? If we are humble, God will furnish us with establishments, and better than those which we are deprived of." Our Saint would not boast of the assistance which she had from kings, queens, princes, princesses, great lords and ladies, and she was wont to say, that we must avail ourselves with such modesty of the favours and good will of the great, that they may see that we esteem ourselves unworthy of it, and that we do not wish to be importunate; and that every one may know that we do not make a boast of our interest.

A person of high life, and to whom we were under great obligations, asked her one day to write in his favour to her Royal Highness, to obtain for him the post of captain in her guards, but he never could induce her to do so; she assured him with profound humility that it would be a subject of ridicule, if she were to presume to claim so much interest. Although it grieved her exceedingly to refuse him, yet she did so, and said to the sister who was present, that she should indeed have been ashamed if it were said at court, "Such a one obtained his place through the interest of Mother de Chantal." She however requested the Bishop of Geneva to write to the queen in behalf of this man, saying that she would pray to our Lord for him, and that true religious ought not to think that they have favour with any one but God.

She was told that a deposed superioress, who had acquired considerable interest, used it in behalf of those who applied to her, whereon our Blessed Mother adroitly sought for an opportunity to warn her about it in charity, and to point out to her that it was too grand a thing for our littleness, telling her in confidence about herself, that though she had great connections and interest in the parliament of Dijon, yet she never remembered having made any application to her relatives since she had become a religious, except once to one of her cousins, in a matter of religion and charity, and that we ought to regard ourselves as too insignificant to be mentioned or known in parliament or at court. Our Saint was not ignorant of the esteem and affection in which she was held by the queen, who often enquired after her. When heaven granted the prayers of France, and this good queen became *enceinte* with the Dauphin, who had been so long desired, the Archbishop of Bourges going to congratulate her, her majesty requested his grace to write to our Blessed Mother to recommend her to her prayers, as well as those of her order. The Archbishop of Bourges urged her, on this occasion, to write to the queen, to congratulate her on being enceinte, assuring her that her majesty would be very much pleased by it, but she excused herself, begging this good prelate to assure the queen that she had written to all our houses, that they should pray earnestly for her majesty; and when we begged her to accede to his request, and write this congratulatory letter, she replied: "I cannot, for what am

I, to venture to write to this great queen? We ought to keep ourselves so low and hidden, as never to do anything to be observed by the great; if we perform well towards them our duty before God, praying to Him for their preservation, their success, and especially for their salvation, God will make us known to them when we want their protection, and will incline their affections towards us." She said once that she believed that there were few congregations more beloved by the great than our own, and that it was a gift of God, which we should certainly lose if we sought to preserve it by human means. She altogether broke off some very important business, because it was bringing us into notice and worldly influence; and once, when speaking of this subject, she placed her hand upon her eyes with a most charming grace, and exclaimed, "As soon as ever I saw the worldly splendour of it, it dazzled my eyes, and I could no longer see at all in the business." She often said "The splendour of the nuns of the Visitation is to be without splendour, and their glory is their lowliness." She was once told that our sisters at Paris could do much in some business, as they had great interest with the parliament; she replied, "It is true they have great interest, and God preserves it to them, because they preserve for God their simplicity and humility, and a very great forgetfulness of the world. I can assure you that these three virtues shine brightly in their community, and this is our true glory."

When our Blessed Mother was travelling, she

avoided as much as she could, all pompous and ceremonious receptions. When she was obliged to receive addresses from the clergy or magistrates who went to visit her in a body, she blushed like a young maiden who receives an insult, and answered in very few words, as wishing to show that she did not know how to correspond to anything which savoured ever so little of vanity or pomp. A sister once told her that her daughter, Madame de Toulonjon, had requested her to let her know when she was to set out for France, in the year 1655, that she might meet and accompany her on her journey. The Saint turned sweetly to our dear Mother Faber, and said to her, "What shall we do? God knows how delighted I should be to have my daughter with me; but it is a pity; we should have to have litters and carriages, and a train of attendants, which would all displease me exceedingly; when we arrived in any town they would say, It is Mother de Chantal, who is going to St. Mary's; all this breathes the spirit of the world, and is very disagreeable to me. I love so much," she added "my little company, our shut up litter, our ecclesiastic, and two muleteers." How strenuously did our Blessed Mother refuse to allow that five or six of our sisters at Annecy, belonging to high families, should accept certain abbeys which were offered to them by their relatives, and how much was she delighted with our dear sister Anne Marie de Léage, for the generous resistance which she made herself to a similar offer from her brother the Duke de Puy. She wrote in the following

terms of it to our dear Mother Marie Jacqueline Faber, "For the rest, our dear mother of Poitiers is indeed happy in having shown such virtue and such a love for her lowly vocation, and for having given such an example to her institute, of which indeed those are not the true daughters who would not willingly prefer humility to grandeur. Oh God, how I should grieve to see any of our sisters leaning on a crosier, and possessing the rank, name, and attendance of a lady!" Our Saint declared in her *Replies*, with words which seemed exaggerated, though they were only what her zeal really inspired, that we ought never to accept or possess abbeys, or priories, unless it be to change them entirely into convents of the Visitation, and that with permission from Rome, and even in this she wished that we should be very reserved. One of our nuns, who was rather dissatisfied, wrote to our Blessed Mother, stating that she had left an abbey and a priory to become a daughter of Mary, and that having refused the crosier which St. Benedict presented to her, she had only found a cross in the hands of our Blessed Father. Our Blessed Mother thus replied: "My daughter, it is your happiness to have found the cross; the crosier never opened heaven to any one, the cross opens it to the whole world. In vain do any come to the Visitation if they hope to find anything there but the hidden and humble life of the cross, for, my daughter, do you not read that the congregation is even founded on Mount Calvary?" Our Blessed Mother not only hated show in matters of importance, but even in

things of less consequence; composed countenances, studied speeches, affected proprieties, fashionable language, complimentary letters, and far-fetched words, were all an abomination in her sight, and when a new postulant spoke affectedly, our Blessed Mother did all in her power to change her mode of speaking, correcting her at every turn, making her read before her, in order to make her pronounce her words simply and straightforwardly. She would not permit us, when speaking of spiritual matters, to use learned or elevated language, saying that it was contrary to the humility and simplicity of life which we ought to profess utterly and entirely.

She generally found kneeling-stools prepared for her in the choir when visiting our houses; she would never use them, nor suffer a cloth on her table. "Are we ladies?" she used to say; "Do we require the luxuries of the world?" Once a religious came here who was a little scented. Our Saint said that every time she approached her she felt quite sick. "I wonder at this," she said, "for our princesses come here so scented and perfumed, that everything they touch is redolent of it, and I do not so much as think of the scent, but this religious makes me quite ill; I believe it arises from the aversion which we ought to have to worldly things. Religious should have no other scent than the good odour of their piety, humility, and modesty." She detested all shakes and prettinesses in singing, and though she liked much to hear fine voices, and to have the litanies and hymns well sung, she wished the sing-

ing to be simple, and without these worldly ornaments. She desired that not only our persons, but our buildings also should show humble simplicity and contempt of the world. Our Blessed Father speaking of her in a letter respecting the little room we have in this first convent, says, "As to our Mother, she has learned so well to lodge on Mount Calvary, that every earthly habitation seems to her to be still too fine." Our Saint often said that superiors, when they build, should be careful that the architects should do nothing which should show splendour. She was much mortified whenever she thought of a certain lodge, which forms the entrance to the apartments of the tourières, and to the parlour, in our house at Tours, "because," she said, "it resembles a château, but it was made with such affection and good faith on the part of the architect, that that alone makes it tolerable to me." When we wrote the Foundation of our convent at Troyes, our Blessed Mother made us add that there were certain superfluities in the building which the architect had made, which the sisters had been unable to control, as the building was far from where they lodged. In her last journey she censured our dear sisters at Nevers, because the door of their church was too highly ornamented, and ordered them to write to all our convents, that they had done wrong in this, so much did she fear that these examples might have bad consequences, and induce others to do the same.

CHAPTER XXI.

OF HER LOVE FOR REGULAR OBSERVANCE.

The rule and the actions of our Blessed Mother were so well adjusted to one another, that we may say that the one was the exact measure of the other, and that she had, according to the instructions which she gave us at the end of her life, conformed all her inclinations to the rule, and not the rule to her inclinations. She incessantly recommended punctuality in observance, both in her letters and in her discourses; but punctuality without vexation or narrowness of spirit, a gay and loving punctuality, a punctuality proceeding from the heart. She often bid us be punctual not to the mere letter, but to its meaning and its spirit. "It is good," she said, "to observe the rule which says that we should go promptly at the first stroke of the bell, but it is better to observe most minutely that which orders the perfect self-denial of our own will." She often said to us, "My sisters, I am very much afraid lest we should be satisfied with this external observance, without applying ourselves to the rules which purely concern interior perfection, for we shall have to give a more exact account of the latter than of the former." She said that she knew no rule which told upon her more than this, "They shall do

everything in a spirit of profound, sincere, and frank humility;" for that it should be remarked that the rule says *in a spirit*, not in look, in words, or in appearance.

She also recommended, with singular affection, exactness in little things, and reminded us of those words pronounced by the Eternal Truth, "He that shall break one of these least commandments, and shall so teach men, shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven." This truth leads us to believe that our Blessed Mother was very great in the kingdom of heaven, for she observed, and taught us to observe with a most exact fidelity, all those least commandments of rules, ceremonies, and observances, which are very numerous in religious houses, and by which everything is done in good order. The more she advanced in age, the more punctual was she in these little ordinances and practices; she would not dispense herself from an inclination of the head, from any little ceremony, or from taking care to raise her dress while descending the stairs. When deposed, she was the first, on the eve of the new year, to give her cross, her rosary, and pictures to the sister assistant for the change, in which she drew, like the rest of the sisters, refusing any dispensation. She knelt down before the superioress for the corrections like the rest of the community. If any of the sisters or the community in general were told of a fault, she was the first on her knees to accuse herself of it, in whatever little way she might have failed in it, for she never approved of any one

accusing herself generally, and was wont to say, that this was to perform a most solemn action without application, and in a careless and perfunctory manner. Her exact attendance on all the offices, and even extraordinary prayers, which are only permitted, and not prescribed by the rule, was truly wonderful. Her age, and the multiplicity of her business, having made her mornings necessary to her, she requested permission of the Bishop of Geneva, to exempt herself from assisting at Tierce and Sext, to which she only went on festivals. She also wished that our good Mother de Châtel should ask our most honoured spiritual father for the same privilege, for a sister whom she employed as her secretary, and who could not therefore assist at the community offices. When our Blessed Mother was having the decorations prepared for the Beatification of our Blessed Father, as it was a very long business, and it was absolutely necessary that the sisters should rise earlier in the summer mornings, and absent themselves from the offices, she spoke of it to the Bishop of Geneva, and ordered us to have a time fixed, and a bell rung, at which we were to be ready to go and perform our spiritual exercises, in order that even in this we might keep our observance. When she ordered the sisters to do any common work, such as carrying wood, stones, lie for washing, or other things, she never failed in taking part in it, and even when her age and her weak health had diminished her strength, she used to carry three loads in honour of the Blessed Trinity, and five

in honour of the five wounds, and then retired, saying most graciously, "Our sisters offer to our Lord according to the riches of their fervour, and I according to my weakness and poverty." What enabled her almost always to have time to be with the community, was that she never lost her time in useless conversation. She listened to all the sisters had to say concerning their wants with the greatest kindness and patience, but she invariably cut short everything superfluous with such holy firmness, that none ever dared to approach her for this purpose; she used even to reprove the sisters, if through not taking care to ask for their permissions in the time of obedience, they were compelled to speak in the hour of silence.

She was very adroit in getting away from the parlour, and as she was ever ready to remain there as long or as often as charity required, for the consolation of any soul, so also did she, with a holy rigour, invariably retire when the office or any other of the community exercises sounded, whenever she was only kept there by those whom she could leave, or engaged in indifferent conversation. She said that our greatest civility is to show ourselves good religious. It was easier, it is true, for her to act thus than any other, as many were satisfied with only seeing her. She was also wont to say, that the religious who is fond of useless conversation, does not know what it is to converse with God. She had a great affection for holy reading, nevertheless, on work days, she only employed half an hour in this exercise, as the rule requires, and when it was decided that

those who did not wish to take their half-hour's repose in summer, in the middle of the day, should be obliged to go on with their work, our Saint, who till then was accustomed to spend this half-hour in holy recreation of her soul, by reading the holy Scriptures, altogether retrenched this liberty, and subjected herself like the others to do her work, whenever she did not repose. When the sisters urged her to employ this half-hour in reading, she replied, "We should always do that which is most in conformity with the rule, when we know it." She used occasionally to return from the parlour quite worn out; when there was not more than half a quarter of an hour of recreation remaining, the sisters would try to persuade her for so short a time, not to take up her work, but she would reply with a sweet smile, "Ah! what shall we do with the rule which orders the sisters to work at the recreation?" and saying this she would take up her work.

She was often heard to say that nothing was ordered uselessly in rules and religious houses, and felt a great dislike for any interpretations or questions which trenched in the least upon simple and exact observance, and her usual reply used to be, "See what is written, and do it." A superioress proposed to her a certain method of making the sisters give an account of their interior, so that they should only do it every three months, saying that in the other months they need say but little, and that so all might be finished in an hour. Our Saint was touched to the quick by this proposal, and answered with

some severity, that if she knew any houses were the rule was interpreted with such latitude, she would complain of it to superiors; she also advised the good Mother, if she had acted thus, to confess her fault, and to inflict on herself some penance, that she might remember it all her life. About the same time another superioress wrote to her, that she made one part of the choir give her this account one month, and the other part the next, and that she did so because she was very busy in the building, as well as other business. Our Saint replied to her, "My dear daughter, your principal business should be to observe your rule, without omitting one iota of it, and I am of opinion that you are infringing it in a very essential point, which is the interior direction of the sisters; now I entreat you to make a thorough amendment in this matter, and to ask pardon of your Chapter for the bad example you have shown, in perverting this rule, in order that none may be led astray by it. I thank God that I am now in my last three years without my ever having passed a month without making our sisters render this account, except when I have been travelling, and once only during my illness." Our Blessed Mother was so exact on this point, that when she had to visit those houses which were near us, as Chambéry and Thonon, she set out after having made her sisters give an account of their conscience, and returned on an appointed day to hear them the following month.

Some of the sisters consultors of one of our houses, wrote to our Blessed Mother a few weeks

only previous to her departure for Moulins, on occasion of her last journey, to request her to allow the second three years of their Mother to be extended to four years, or that they might delay her deposition for a few months, and then allow a year to elapse without an election, so that this superioress might be only nominally deposed, and might really continue to govern them, alleging that she was exceedingly useful to them, for the building and for other reasons, which our worthy Mother called unreasonable. She was so much grieved by this proposal, so contrary to observance, that she wept bitterly at it, and told us that if God abandoned her so far as to let her write to allow the rule to be transgressed, and things to be done contrary to observance, she would wish that her hand might wither, to give an example to all the order, to keep firmly and simply to observance; that all such interpretations were in the Institute like those who falsely interpreted, and consequently made void the law among the Jews, and calling our dear Mother de Blonay, she said to her, "My dear Mother, what would you say of these daughters who have written to me thus? I assure you that if a convent acted as they say, and superiors refused to set the matter right, I would have recourse to Rome, for after having made a triennium of four years, it would be said that it might very well be prolonged to five, and thus the rule would gradually go into abeyance; and if I did not know the innocence of these daughters who have written to me, and were not sure that they will abide by

what we shall tell them, we would procure them a good penance from their superiors, and get them deposed from their office of consultors."

Our Blessed Mother had this holy observance so much at heart, that she was exact in it even in her journeys, being accustomed to carry a watch to make her prayer and spiritual lecture, and to say her office at the hours appointed by the Constitutions. She always carried her Rule about with her, and read some portion of it daily, and kissed it after reading it; and she was not content with reading the Constitutions through once a month, as is ordered, but there were certain points which regarded interior perfection, which she read often, and counselled her sisters to do so likewise, saying that there is no better book for a religious than her Rule.

CHAPTER XXII.

OF HER SWEET CONVERSATION AND EXACTNESS IN SILENCE.

How delightful must have been her conversation, whose heart was in heaven; I do not speak of her conversation before her widowhood, as it was only that of a noble lady of good judgment and agreeable humour, exceedingly attractive, and simple in her manners, without flattery or affectation, very modest, and exceedingly amiable, and beloved by all. When she became

a widow, she formed her conversation on the instructions which our Blessed Father gave to his dear Philothea. It was ever full of gracious seriousness, or sweet and amiable piety, or prudent and devout condescension, without awkwardness or constraint, according to the variety of times, seasons, places, and persons. But when she had entirely left the dens of leopards, to enter into the secret recesses of the religious life, it must be acknowledged that this holy spouse spoke a new language; her discourse was ever that of the Sunamitess; and we have been told by our first Mothers, that nothing could be more fervent than were the recreations and conversations of our sisters, at the commencement of the Institute. These happy souls were inebriated with a milk far better than wine, and could not satisfy nor enjoy themselves but with the remembrance of the breasts of their Sovereign lover. They hardly spoke of anything but of prayer, fervour, and fidelity in mortification, which they called their little property, of which our Blessed Mother gave them so sweet an example, that all were drawn by the odour of her perfume. This went so far that our Blessed Father ordered them not to speak so much of prayer at recreation, but of things less serious and of indifferent subjects. For the full enjoyment of the recreation, our Blessed Mother's presence was necessary, and when she was absent there was not half the same joy or sweetness; she brought them both in her very look; and she was very careful in her *Replies*, to inculcate upon our superioresses how necessary

recreation is to nuns, especially those who, like ourselves, ought to profess great solitude, retirement, and interior life. Once one of our superioresses told her that she thought she ought to give some advice respecting the recreations, in order that they might be conducted with seriousness; that she was pained at seeing her daughters laugh, when she remembered that St. Benedict never laughed. Our Blessed Mother replied; "We must, my dear daughter, honour all that the saints have done; if you were a Benedictine, it would be our duty to explain to you this feature of the life of the great St. Benedict, but since you are of the Visitation, you should understand the spirit of your holy founder, who was a saint, as I can assure you, and yet his sanctity did not hinder him from being full of sweet joyousness at times of holy recreation, or from communicating it to others, and he would laugh heartily when occasion required it. I read but a few days since, in Holy Scripture, that Sarah said respecting the miraculous conception of her son, 'The Lord hath made me laugh, and I reflected that the spirit of God brings joy, and that since Providence has made it necessary for us to eat, drink, sleep, and divert ourselves, we should say, the Lord makes me drink, the Lord makes me eat, the Lord makes me sleep, laugh, and amuse myself, and thus all would be done in obedience and in the name of the Lord. Be careful, my dear daughter, not to deprive your sisters of the liberty which the rule gives them, and be not so severe; provided the recreation be made according to the rule, be

satisfied; do you not see, my dear daughter, that we who are superiors, when we have spent a portion of our day in transacting business, or in the parlour, or speaking with the sisters, when we come to the recreation, we seem to have a little leisure, and would willingly give that time to entire recollection, but our sisters who have not moved from the choir or their cells, have need to unstring their bows, as our Blessed Father said."

It is very true that our worthy Mother after some years, either through the multiplicity of business, or the greatness of her interior attention, or the intensity of her spiritual sufferings, or her continual weariness of life, or the depression of old age, did not enjoy herself so much at recreation as during her first years, but she left us entire liberty, and when she saw that we were silent on her account, she begged us to talk, adding that if she did not speak, it was on account of the oppression of her stomach, and to give us confidence, she occasionally amused us by relating anecdotes. She watched over her whose duty it was to remind us of the presence of God at times during the recreations, and often did so herself, mingling a few words of devotion, and when the end of the recreation was drawing nigh, she introduced some devout subject, that we might return to silence with a spiritual appetite. In Advent and Lent it was her wish that our recreations should be more devout than at other times, and she occasionally said to us on those days, not that she made a regular custom of it, "Amuse

yourselves as you please for one half hour, and give me the other half to speak about our Lord." While we were spending the first half-hour, she kept her eyes closed gently winding her distaff, but when it was time to speak of our Lord, she quickly found her tongue and her stomach. As to her conversations in the parlour or in private, they were wise, holy, sweet, and gracious. She never remained longer than was necessary in the parlour, not desiring to know the news, and if she perchance heard any, never related it to the community.

From her sweet conversation we must pass to her great fidelity and love of silence. As to the silence in the afternoon, being almost always superioress, and obliged as such to speak to the sisters and on business, she never made any scruple about doing so, but as regards the great silence, we must acknowledge that she was holily austere and rigid, and without real necessity would never have said a single word. She reprimanded those sisters who came at that time to tell her something which might have been foreseen or delayed. Her exactness in the great silence caused a most amusing mistake while she was in our convent at Grenoble. She had retired to say Matins in her cell, when not finding any office-book, she made a sign to her companion for it, naming it to her in half a word ; her companion knowing that she had made a bad supper, thought that she was ill, and that she had asked for an egg (œuf) ; she went to the superioress, and told her of it. They were the more anxious about it,

because it was well-known that our Saint never made such requests. What made the joke still better was, that there were no eggs in the house, and a lay sister was obliged to be sent to get some from a neighbour. While they were gone for and were being cooked, our Blessed Mother had to wait in her cell alone, on her knees before the crucifix. At last the superior, her companion, and some other sisters, entered her cell with the eggs, wishing also to see how she was. When she perceived the mistake, she laughed so heartily that no eggs had ever done her so much good, but by a holy austerity to keep her resolution not to speak in the time of the great silence, except for necessary things, she contented herself with saying, "I asked for an office-book," and delayed till the morrow's recreation to tell the story in full, wishing the superioress and her sisters good night, by a gracious smile and a bow of the head. This mistake and others led her to decide that it was better to write what was wanted in the hour of silence, or to say five or six words when real necessity required them, than to make unintelligible signs, which either cause annoyance or ridiculous mistakes.

The Baroness de Thorens, the daughter of our Blessed Mother, often resided in our convent, for besides that she was the daughter of our Foundress, we were not then as yet strictly cloistered. Every morning this amiable lady was wont, on the bell ringing for prayers, to go to her room door, to wish her dear mother good morning, who returned it without breaking silence,

by a loving look and an inclination of her head. Our Saint very often spoke to us of the virtue of silence, not only exterior but interior. She rarely spoke of one without the other, and said that she had remarked, in her visits to many of our houses, that where silence was best observed, the sisters enjoyed more extraordinary graces. She recommended us most strongly to speak but little, and said that as we ought to have a holy joy and gladness at the recreations, so at other times we ought to be exceedingly reserved, in order to apply ourselves seriously to God. She repeatedly said, "My dear daughters, we should serve God seriously, and make great account of holy mourning, for blessed are they who mourn in this world, for they shall have eternal consolation and joy in the next." For many years she spoke to us much about this holy mourning, and that virtuous sadness, which makes us to work out our salvation with fear and trembling, and she said that silence was a great means of obtaining it. When she found anything in a book about speaking too much, or the utility of silence, she usually had it read aloud to the community, expressing a great desire that we should not only be very exact in silence through obligation, but also that, through devotion and a desire of perfection, we should be very zealous in retrenching all useless words, except at the time of recreation. As to herself, she always said much in her silence ; her admirable modesty, a glance from her dove-like eyes, the seriousness, wisdom, and calmness, which appeared in her actions, spoke more than

her tongue. She was wont to say that a religious who loves silence is always very careful in every little practice of observance or of virtue, because, when the occasions present themselves, she is always at home by recollection. Our saint was so desirous that none of those things which appear trifling should be neglected, that she often spoke to us of them, pointing out to us that they seem indeed to be trifling, but that love ought to magnify them; and she was so careful about them herself, that we were astonished at her exactness.

CHAPTER XXIII.

BEGINS TO TREAT OF THE INTERIOR OF OUR BLESSED MOTHER, AND, FIRST, OF THE HONOUR AND OBEDIENCE WHICH SHE PAID TO HER DIRECTOR.

It seems as if it were fitting for us to enter into the interior of our Blessed Mother by the door of silence. We will not here speak of the honour and respect which our Blessed Mother paid her first spiritual father, of whom we have spoken above; but when this obedient Tobias had found the angelic Ananias to be her guide in the journey of perfection and of the interior life, she loved him as her father but she revered him as her guardian angel: "I knew not sometimes," said she, "when I looked at this holy prelate, whether I should regard him as an angel whom

God had sent to live among men, or as a man who had made himself an angel by the grace of God." She esteemed herself unworthy of spinning clothes for him, or of mending with her own hands the linen which he used. God showed her this His faithful servant so exalted in perfection, that she often seemed to despair of attaining to his standard, and was obliged sometimes to encourage herself with those words of the Saviour, "Be ye perfect, as also your heavenly Father is perfect." All the words which this holy bishop uttered for the instruction of this beloved daughter, were seeds of love which she sowed in the good ground of her heart; she watered them with a continual desire, and a great fidelity, and thus produced fruits of every kind of virtue. She obliged herself, in the year 1604, to obey this holy prelate, by a vow made with her whole heart, and written with her own hand, as we have said above. Our Blessed Father bound himself also by vow to be the spiritual director of our Blessed Mother. The following is the form of it, which our Blessed Mother ever carried about her, and with which she desired to be buried; "I, Francis de Sales, Bishop of Geneva, accept on the part of God the vows of chastity, obedience, and poverty, just renewed by Jane Frances Frémiot, my very dear spiritual daughter, and after having myself reiterated the solemn vow of perpetual chastity, made by me on the reception of orders, which I confirm with all my heart; I vow and promise to direct, assist, serve, and advance the above-named Jane Frances Frémiot, my daughter, as

carefully, faithfully, and holily as I can in the love of God and perfection of her soul, which, from this time forth, I receive and hold as my own, to answer for it before God our Saviour, and this I vow to the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, to whom be honour, glory, and benediction, for ever and ever. Amen. Made while elevating the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar in the Holy Mass, in the sight of His Divine Majesty, of the Most Holy Virgin, our Lady, of my guardian angel, and that of the above-named Jane Frances Frémiot, my very dear daughter, and of all the heavenly court, on the 22nd day of August, the Octave of the Assumption of the ever-glorious Virgin, to whose protection I commend with all my heart this my vow, in order that it may be for ever firm, stable, and inviolable. Amen. Francis de Sales, Bishop of Geneva." From these reciprocal vows arose that perfect and pure union of heart in these two saints, and that entire communication of spiritual goods; so that to them might well be applied St. Luke's words when he spoke of the commencement of the Church, "They had but one heart and one soul,"

After the decease of our Blessed Father, our Blessed Mother wrote with her own hand on the paper of the Saint's vow: "O most adorable and sovereign Trinity, who from all eternity, by Thy incomprehensible mercy for me, hast destined me to the happiness of being directed by Thy most humble and holy servant, Francis de Sales, my true and most dear Father, vouchsafe, O most sweet Goodness, that this vow may not be ter-

minated, but that he may continue his paternal care and direction over me until he has led me into Thy heavenly tabernacles, after which I sigh incessantly through the merits of the Passion of my Saviour; but if this prayer be not agreeable to Thy Divine Majesty, I desire never to have made it, re-confirming to-day, in the presence of the Divine Sacrament of Thy true Body, the vows which I have made to the ever Blessed and adorable Trinity, in the hands of this my Father, and the entire self-renunciation which I made without the slightest reserve, on the Wednesday before the Festival of the Holy Spirit, 1616."

After this our Blessed Mother adds a long prayer, written with her own hand, vowing herself anew to observe all that she had learned from the saint, and finished it with these words: "O my Saviour, have I acted against the reverence I owe to the character of Thy saint for having written the above! Alas! if it displeases Thee, I beg of Thee to efface it, and to pardon me, as also all my offences and failures in obedience and respect which I have so often committed, though involuntarily, against Thy servant, my Blessed Father." It is to pay great honour, and to have a great submission to a director, so as not to let it be ended even by death. Our Blessed Mother often said, that she would rather die than fail in accomplishing what she knew to be the intentions of our Blessed Father, either as regarded herself or the Institute. If she continued her obedience to him, so also did he his direction, for not only did she meet with all that she

wanted in his writings, but she also said in confidence, that for many years she had frequently had an intellectual vision of our Blessed Father at her right hand, as a second guardian angel, who was her interior guide and instructor, and strengthened her in her most difficult trials. Who is there that will not easily believe that this good pilot, having himself safely arrived in port, would often return by an invisible assistance, concealed indeed from the senses, but visible to the mind, to guide her who had so absolutely abandoned herself to his pilotship in the open sea of perfection? As the Bishop of Sens said, this Blessed Mother was so humble that she thought, and wished others to believe, that what she received in an extraordinary way were only dreams and simple thoughts. Actuated by such humble sentiments, she wrote as follows: "Our Blessed Father has since his death appeared to me thrice in a dream. The first time, he said to me, 'My daughter, God has sent me to you to tell you that it is His wish that you should be extremely humble;' the second time, he said, 'God has sent me to you to make you a perfect dove;' the third time, 'My daughter, never complain of anything that is done against you, nor be angry at the faults which are committed in the convent, but only say;—What! ought servants of God to do such and such things? Never be excited, but do all things in a spirit of repose and of tranquillity.'"

On the Feast of the Holy Innocents, 1632, in one of these mystical dreams, our Blessed Mother saw our Blessed Father in his Pontifical vestments,

seated in a beautiful chair, in great majesty and glory. She threw herself on her knees before him, and said: "Father, tell me what thou wishest me to do in order to arrive at the perfection to which I aspire." The Saint replied: "Do always well what you have begun to do well." "But, my true Father," replied she, "teach me the will of God, that I may perform it." He replied: "God wills, my daughter, that you should finish with love and courage what love has made you begin." Often and often did our Blessed Father visit her with most sweet odours, interior words and continual assistance; and she on her side followed this good director with perfect fidelity, constant love, and so great a devotion, that its equal could not be found in the world. Her care in collecting and printing all that she could of the writings and words of our Blessed Father, her continual zeal, and admirable diligence in obtaining the informations of his holy life and miracles, all that she said at every opportunity of his intentions and words, her care in adorning his shrine and procuring ornaments for his beatification, her devotion in distributing his relics, all these, and a thousand other matters which might be brought forward, are an irrefragable proof of her incomparable fidelity to her holy and perfect director; and this faithful constancy in following her guide, is a sure sign of the great progress which she made in the interior life, since she never turned aside to seek after any other path than that which her Raphael showed her on the part of God.

CHAPTER XXIV.

OF HER WAYS OF PRAYER.

Let us enter into this house of *prayer*, since we have found its master and the road. God had always given to this holy soul a great attraction to apply to prayer. But her love for her husband and her children, the care of her household affairs, and the amusement of her parties, divided this poor heart, which God wishing to possess alone, He separated her from all things, as well by the decease of the Baron de Chantal, as by the general disgust which He gave her for the things of the world. As soon as she was a widow, she became entirely devout, and had such an attraction to lead a life altogether pure, disengaged, and contemplative, that, as we have already said, she would have left her country, had not her children retained her, to go and lead a retired life, concealed from the eyes of the world. Without knowing what she did, nor what God was operating in her, having never been instructed in the spiritual life, she would have spent her nights in prayer on her knees; her servants watched one after another to make her retire to rest, as she was in the habit of getting up in the middle of the night to enjoy her God in quiet prayer, favoured by the darkness and stillness of the hour.

When she placed herself under the guidance of her first director, of whom we have spoken so much, he gave her certain very tedious methods of mental prayer, to which she applied herself with as much fidelity and care, as if she had

felt great pleasure therein, though, in truth, her heart was greatly tormented by such methods. When under the guidance of our Blessed Father, she seemed to swim in deep water by the method which he gave her for meditation; but especially because he left her at liberty to follow her interior attrait, and taught her that we often by our own human devices oppose the Spirit of God, and the operations of His grace in our souls.

She spent seven years in the ordinary train of meditations and reflections; but after these seven years of faithful and painful service, without being deceived, her heart was married to the lovely Rachel of holy contemplation, to which she never presumed herself able to attain, for she never in any way entered of herself into any extraordinary kind of mental prayer; indeed, after sometimes speaking of spiritual things with a very great servant of God, who counselled her to use a very spiritual method of mental prayer, and one separated from sensible objects, our worthy Mother, who never took a step without her guide, mentioned it to our Blessed Father, who wrote that she must still wait in the valleys to gather hyssop; that her arms were not yet long enough to reach the cedars of Lebanon. "Let us gather," said he, "humble flowerets at the foot of the cross; let us be satisfied with kissing the feet of our Spouse; He well knows when He should call us to kiss His mouth."

During the seven years that our Blessed Mother employed this mental prayer, she received great favours from heaven, and often was rapt into ecstasies, as may be seen in what we have said above.

But when this holy lover had gathered myrrh for a length of time, she was introduced into the cellar of wine. She was put to sleep by this sweet charm, and kept in a very pure method of prayer, and withheld from all other action, save that of a simple abandonment of herself to the Divine Will. As she possessed a quick and fertile understanding, the inferior part of her soul opposed this holy idleness, wishing always to act, though in reality her attrait was to be entirely passive. Our Blessed Father said to her once, to encourage her in this method; "You are like the little St. John, while others are eating at the Lord's table by pious meditations and reflections, you repose on His sacred bosom; that love of simple confidence and loving sleep of your soul in the arms of her Saviour, contain more excellently all that you are searching for here and there according to your taste." This Blessed Father and skilful director once wrote to her thus: "Remain, my dear Mother, in this simple and pure filial confidence near our Lord, without stirring in the slightest degree to make sensible acts, either of the understanding or of the will; have no more thought for your safety than a traveller who has embarked with good faith on board a vessel, whose only care is to remain in it, leaving the care of catching the breeze, and furling and unfurling the sails to the pilot, to whose conduct he has entrusted himself; Jesus is our pilot, under whose guidance you have placed yourself; leave Him to govern your soul, and since He wishes you to be inactive, be so as long as He wishes."

In the many and severe struggles which the inferior part of our Blessed Mother's soul waged with the superior part to withdraw her from this simple path, separated from all sensible images, she was very careful to instruct herself well, and among many questions which we have found written by our Blessed Mother, with the answers to them by our Blessed Father, she speaks as follows; "I have often been in trouble, seeing that all preachers and good books teach that we ought to meditate on the benefits of our Lord, His greatness, and the Mysteries of our Redemption, especially when the Church presents them to us; now the soul which is in this state of simple regard and inaction, wishing to try to do it, cannot succeed in it, and his often very much troubled at this; but, nevertheless, it seems to me that she does it in a more excellent manner, by a simple recollection and most delicate representation of the mystery with sweet and delicious affections. Your Lordship will understand it far better than I can express it." Our Blessed Father replies, "Let the soul dwell upon the mysteries in the way of prayer which God has given her, for preachers and spiritual books do not mean otherwise." "But then," asks our saint, "must not the soul, especially in prayer, endeavour to stop all discourses, industries, replies, curiosities, and such like, and instead of looking at what she does, what she has done, or what she will do, look at God, and thus simplify her mind, and empty it of all care of itself, abiding in this simple view of God and her own nothingness, entirely given up to His Holy Will, under the

Blessed Father gave her, so confirmed her in her path, that she could not be moved from it; and when she committed any fault in it, that is, when she wished to do anything after her own taste, love corrected her for it, as we have seen written with her own hand in these words, "On leaving Holy Communion, having wished to make more special acts than those of my simple regard and abandonment to God, His goodness reproved me for it, and showed me that it was only through love of myself that I wished to make such acts, by which I did as much harm to my soul as is done to a weak and sickly person who is startled from his first sleep, and who cannot afterwards find repose."

CHAPTER XXV.

OF HER WAYS OF PRAYER CONTINUED.

The heart of our Blessed Mother was truly that house of prayer which the Eternal Wisdom has built for Himself; and as I have heard it said by a person of great spirituality, the Divine Wisdom presented two sorts of food for the nourishment of His well-beloved, one of which was firm and solid, the other liquid and flowing. The solid was that constant and generous devotion, separated from all tenderness, delicacy and self-seeking, and closely applied, on the contrary, with admirable attention, to every virtue even the most minute; the liquid food was a pouring forth of the divine grace into the soul of this well-beloved, a simple, calm, sweet, and experi-

mental knowledge of the goodness of God, and of His pure, ardent, and all-consuming love, and in proportion as grace was infused into this loving heart, it left itself, and lost itself in God, with all its desires, fervours, lights, and affections.

In this silence, this soul, holily infantine, was nourished with milk from her Beloved, which made her heart grow in His divine love; she there received a delicious wine, which warmed and fortified her in her labours, and recreated her in her weaknesses. In this banquet of the Spouse, the honey of sweetnesses which she ate was rather to purify her soul, than to amuse her with the sense of its sweetness. She not only with the ear of the heart, heard many things which pass all human intelligence, but at times also a distinct voice, as we have said, and as we shall relate hereafter. In this loving silence and sleep, with her eyes closed, she saw clear lights, and was taught many mystical and secret things; seeing everything by simple faith, she had sweet experiences of those things which cannot be touched or seen. In this sacred path, notwithstanding her continual temptations, her understanding was altogether simplified, and if we may say so, this faithful spouse allowed her human eyes to be blinded with the veil of faith by the hands of love, this love having withdrawn her from the senses and from the operations of the understanding; and she being thus despoiled of all, by an absolute quitting of herself and all things, possessed, above all, Him, for whose love she had trodden both herself, and all things underfoot.

We can safely say that the prayer of this good mother was continual, according to the advice of St. Paul; and I cannot give a better view of her interior life than by saying that it was a continual and simple looking at God in all things, and at all things in God, a perpetual adherence to God, a continual *fiat Voluntas*. She was not in the slightest degree troubled if dryness deprived her of tenderness and sweetness; and if she was attacked by rude privations, trials, and temptations, her fidelity was always unalterable. Whether the breasts of the Spouse were better than wine to the taste of this well-beloved or that He fed her with the bread of tribulation, and the water of anguish, she never left her interior retreat to seek other food; she held fast to this guidance of God over her, and the heat of her love supported her without her being spiritually weakened. She had written as follows with her own hand, to a soul drawn to this good path of holy simplicity: "If you follow the designs of God respecting you, though heaven and earth were overturned, still you would not cease to keep your eyes fixed on Him." This was truly her practice, to look at God, and not to search into what He does in us; to remain in the simple expectation of what it may please Him to do; and when anything has happened to be contented with accepting lovingly all that He has willed or permitted; this simple method had led her to so great a habit of prayer, that in every place she was in prayer, and for several years was so profoundly recollected that she had her eyes continually closed, and it was easily

seen that she felt great difficulty in quitting this holy interior solitude to discharge the business of the world. She was wont to say to us, that, in order to pray, it is not necessary to be always on our knees; that since the Spouse said, "I sleep, but my heart waketh," that is, my heart prays, my heart loves, a good religious can always say, "I am in recreation, but my heart prays; I work, but my heart is at rest." Once our Blessed Mother, while they were speaking of some affairs that concerned her, had her eyes closed. Our dear Mother de Châtel said to her, "Tell me, I pray you, my dear Mother, what you have just said to our Lord." She replied, "Ah, my dear Mother, you well know I do not say a word to Him, but I earnestly desire that my interior silence may unceasingly revere and adore the Eternal Word."

Our very dear Mother de Blonay having told her that she had read somewhere that whatever we ask of our Lord at certain times He grants; she replied, "As for myself, my dear Mother, I never ask anything in particular from our Lord." She was, in truth, satisfied with saying the Our Father, except that occasionally she read certain prayers in her Hours, such as the thirty petitions to Jesus Christ for the public wants, and that for the purpose of honouring holy Church, who orders and approves of such prayers. Being once asked how she kept her promise with so many who recommended themselves to her prayers, she replied, that she put them in her general intention, or else that she went to say the Our Father

for them, asking God that His will might be done in them, and His name be sanctified.

This great cessation of interior operations made her discover this invention of love; she wrote with her own hand, and signed with her blood, a long prayer which she had composed herself of all the thanksgivings, praises, and prayers, which her devotion and her duties suggested to her, for general and particular benefits, for her relatives and others, for the living and for the dead; and this paper she wore night and day hung round her neck, with her protestation of faith; having made this loving agreement with our Lord, that every time she pressed the little purse containing the aforesaid papers on her heart, she meant to make all the acts of faith, thanksgiving, and prayers contained in this writing. Thus her simple recollection, her single regard, and her devout actions were in her intention a great and long actual prayer, although her heart remained passive, calm, and silent, without saying one word; for love speaks in a mute language, by the eyes or simple signs, as it pleases the lover to interchange communication with his beloved. We shall speak in another place of the maxims and counsels of our Blessed Mother respecting this method of prayer, which is not for all kinds of souls.

CHAPTER XXVI.

OF HER INTERIOR TRIALS.

To trust in God, and to be faithful to Him in the sweetness of interior prosperity, is very easy;

but to be equally faithful to Him amid storms and tempests, trials and abandonments, belongs only to a truly loving, pure, and disinterested heart like that of our Blessed Mother. We have seen her with a fidelity ever increasing in the service of God, with a countenance always serene and mild, and ever advancing steadily and without wavering in her path; yet it might be said that as her attrait, and the way which she pursued was that of simple regard, loving repose, a total abandonment of herself to God, and holy interior silence, this would, without doubt, diminish her sufferings. It was, however, quite the contrary, as our Blessed Mother once said in confidence to one of her daughters, in these words; "In deprivation of all sensible graces, my simple road is a new cross, and my inability to act is an increase of every privation, as would be the case if a person were afflicted with some great pain, and were unable to turn from one side to the other, or were dumb, and unable to express his pain, or blind, and unable to discern whether those who approached his bed were physicians or poisoners; so that the soul in this state of deprivation prefers remaining in a suffering and powerless state." O how many years did our Blessed Mother spend in this state, and in still more painful ones, as we shall presently see.

She was wont to say, weeping most bitterly, that she saw herself without faith, hope, or charity for Him in whom she believed, and hoped, and whom she supremely loved. Our Blessed

Father said to her, "It is a real insensibility which deprives you of the enjoyment of all the virtues, which you nevertheless possess and in good measure too; but you do not enjoy them; you are like a child under a guardian who deprives him of the use of his property, so that while everything is his, yet he has no management, and does not seem to possess anything, or to have anything but his life; and, as says St. Paul, 'he differeth nothing from a servant, though he be lord of all,' and thus, my dear daughter, it is not the will of God that you should have the management of, or enjoy your faith, your hope, your charity, and your other virtues, except in order to live interiorly, and to use them in occasions of pure necessity. Ah! how happy are you to be thus held fast in the embraces of this heavenly guardian! continue then to do what you now do, adore your guardian in silence, and throw yourself into his arms and bosom."

What words can express the languor and martyrdom of loving souls when their well-beloved goes away, and hides Himself, and makes them see and feel that He treats them as if they were his enemies. They feed themselves with tears night and day, while it is said to them, "Where is thy God?" The satisfaction of the presence of a prince or of one that is dearly beloved, by itself makes labour delightful and danger desirable; but there is nothing which evinces such fidelity, and which is so exceedingly trying as to serve a master who knows nothing of it, or who, if he knows it, does

not appear to know or to care for it; and that love must indeed be powerful, since it supports itself alone, and without being supported by any pleasure or private end. Our Blessed Mother was in this state when our Blessed Father wrote to her the following words: "I am now working at your ninth book of the Love of God, and to-day, while praying before my crucifix, God made me see your soul and your state, by the comparison of an excellent musician, born the subject of a prince who loved him exceedingly, and who had told him of his passionate fondness for the sweet melody of his lute and voice; this poor musician became, like you, deaf, and no longer heard his own melody, his master often left him, and yet he did not leave off singing, as he knew that his master had taken him to sing." This comparison is drawn out at length in the Treatise of the Love of God.

The heart of our Blessed Mother in her long privations was like this deaf musician, who was not even aware that he was singing, and beside this, was oppressed with a thousand fears, troubles, alarms, and wearinesses, the enemy suggesting to it that perhaps it was not pleasing to its Divine Master; that its love was useless, nay, even false and vain. She saw neither the good of her labour, nor the well-beloved for whom she was labouring; and what increased her woe, says our Blessed Father, was that the higher part of her reason could not give her any sort of relief, for it was so surrounded with suggestions of the enemy, and so alarmed itself, that it was

sufficiently hard put to it to prevent giving any consent to evil, so that she could no longer make, as she had been wont to do, sallies by the gate of the will to destroy the enemies which attacked her understanding, for in this new way of suffering even her will was not able to go forth to disengage the inferior part of her soul; and though she did not lose courage, she was so furiously attacked, and so wearied, that if she was without fault, she was not without suffering; and to complete her affliction, she was deprived of the general consolation which remains to the most miserable in this world, the prospect of seeing an end to her trials.

Our Blessed Father, consoling her on this inability to look forward to the termination of her interior trials, wrote to her in her little book as follows: "Fear not, my dear Mother, faith resides in the uppermost part and summit of your soul, and this assures you that your trials will be brought to an end, and that you will enjoy the wished-for repose in the bosom of God; but the loudness of the cries and noise made by the enemy in your reason almost prevents the remonstrances of faith from being heard, but I am not at all disturbed, my dear mother, at all this; on the contrary, I bless God in the night of your sufferings, and thank Him heartily who shows you how much you must suffer for His name."

Our Blessed Mother, amid so much darkness, sometimes went to seek light of him, to whom God had imparted it for her guidance. She once

wrote as follows to our Blessed Father; "I write to you, and cannot help doing so, for I find myself more disconsolate than ever this morning; I see that I am wavering at every step, in the anguish of my soul, which is partly caused by my interior deformity, which is very great, I assure you, my good lord and very dear Father, so that I am lost in this abyss of misery. The presence of my God, which formerly gave me such ineffable delight, makes me now tremble and shudder with fear; where I see no fault, the eye of my God sees a horrible and almost infinite number; I seem to see this divine eye, which I adore from the bottom of my heart, pierce my soul through and through like a sword, and look on all my works, thoughts, and words, with indignation, which keeps me in such great distress of heart, that death does not seem so terrible to endure as all this. It seems as if everything had power to hurt me, I fear everything, not that I fear being hurt myself as far as I am concerned, but I am in dread lest I should displease my God, and His divine assistance should be withdrawn from me, which has made me pass this night in great affliction, and I have done nothing but repeat, "My God, why dost thou abandon me? I am Thine, do with me what Thou wilt." At break of day God made me see almost imperceptibly a little light in the uppermost reigons of my soul; all the rest of my soul remained in its trouble, and even this light only lasted during the space of half an *Ave Maria* when a fresh trouble came violently upon me, and completely

enveloped me in darkness. In the weariness of this painful abandonment, I sometimes say to our Lord, that He may hew, and cut, and burn, for I am entirely His."

Our Blessed Father gave excellent instructions to his holy disciple upon her state, telling her that now was truly the time to serve the Saviour purely for the love of His will, not only without pleasure, but amidst these deluges of sadnesses, horrors, fears, and assaults; as did the Blessed Virgin and St. John on the day of the Passion, remaining firm in love, even when the divine Saviour, having withdrawn all His joy into the very summit of His soul, allowed neither gladness nor consolations of any sort to appear in His sacred countenance, and His eyes covered with the darkness of death cast on them only looks of sorrow. He told her also that love deprived her of light and sensible affection, in order that God alone might possess and unite her to Himself, will to will, and heart to heart, immediately, and without the intervention of any satisfaction or desire, however spiritual it might be. In this state of depriving and separating love, like another Magdalene, she received favours and interior words from God without perceiving it, the greatness of her loving grief prevented her from recognizing her lover. We found among the papers of our Blessed Father several notes written by our Blessed Mother, which she had not been able to find to destroy them. In one of them she says, "I believe I shall not be able to see you to-day, my dear Father, and there-

fore I am going to ask you what I ought to do on these festivals. For the last three days, since Maundy Thursday, I have seen myself alone of all creatures abandoned, and deprived of the merits of my Saviour's Passion, and my temptation martyrs me with such cruel tortures, that I have no words to express them."

It seemed to her sometimes as if all her faculties and powers had made a rebel garrison in her heart, in order to prevent her entering into that sacred inner cabinet, in which, at other times, she had so lovingly taken her repast, and reposed in the sunshine of holy favours with the Heavenly Spirit. Our Blessed Father compared her to a sick bee, who has no other remedy than to be exposed to the sun, being unable to go into the flowers to gather honey. He compared her also to David, leaving his city, king as he was, weeping, barefooted, and his head covered, abandoned by all. "He is, however, still king,'' said our Blessed Father, "and will reign, and reduce everything under his obedience. It is Absalom who has troubled the kingdom, and has made it revolt; it is the human spirit and the sensual soul which rise in you, and trouble and disturb the Christian spirit and the spiritual soul." He compared her also to a ship out at sea, a sport to all kinds of storms. Another time he said to her; "It seems to me, my daughter, that your soul is like the prophet, when the angel carried him into the air by the hair of his head;" and going on yet further, he added, "Your abandonment resembles that which our Lord was pleased to feel in His

passion, when His soul was sorrowful even unto death and grievously abandoned: but you have only sweetly to persist in your remedy, leaving your soul entirely in the paternal hands of God." Our holy Mother had taken from a Canticle, composed by a devout servant of God, the four following verses, which, she said, were so suitable to her case, that she could hardly believe but that her guardian-angel had dictated them to the composer.

Mon âme adhère intimement
A son Dieu seul, sans connaissance.
J'endurerai fidèlement;
Croire et souffrir c'est ma science.
Si l'amour est ardent,
L'âme se trouve en se perdant.

Cette pauvre âme est sans pouvoir;
Ce qu'elle fait, elle l'abhorre,
Mais il lui semble le vouloir;
C'est un tourment qui la dévore.
Si l'amour, etc.

Elle a plutôt haine qu'amour,
Plus de dédain que d'espérance,
Elle se perd cent fois le jour,
Et croit être sans conscience,
Si l'amour, etc.

Oh! quel tourment, quelle douleur,
De vivre en cet état; privée
D'espoir, d'amour, vers son Seigneur,
Ainsi qu'une âme réprouvée
Si l'amour, etc.

But we must add a fifth verse for this state of trial, anguish, and loss :—

Dieu la soutint secrètement,
Dans une foi très simple et nue;
Ayant consenti pleinement,
Elle vécut de vie inconnue;
Mais son amour ardent
La fit trouver en se perdant.

CHAPTER XXVII.

OF HER TEMPTATIONS.

If our Blessed Mother was able to say that she never had to combat against flesh and blood, in that infamous temptation which sometimes attack the most saintly with such violence, that it has driven some of them to throw themselves into thorns, and others into ice and snow, we may truly say that in exchange she had to combat against an entire host of spiritual enemies; so that speaking with one of her daughters, on the eve of her departure for her last journey into France, about certain things which were alarming her, she said, "And I, my child, who for forty-one years have been pursued by temptations, must I on that account lose courage? no; I will hope in God, though He should kill and annihilate me for ever." A faithful daughter of Israel indeed, thus to travel forty-one years in the wilderness without once turning away her heart from the Lord!

Our Blessed Father wrote to her before she became a religious, some words which she trea-

sured up in her little book, and kept often before her eyes: "You must resolve to suffer temptations nearly all your life, never to consent to them, and not to be astonished at them, for what does he know who is not tempted?" It is a great mark of the powerlessness of the enemy against this city of God, this house of prayer, that it was so long besieged by him, and yet never surprised. Our Blessed Mother, while speaking of her temptations, was wont to say, "My soul was like a piece of iron, so rusted with sin, that it stood in need of this fire of the justice of God to clean it a little."

But all the trials, sufferings, and temptations, which she had suffered since the time of her widowhood, seemed to her as nothing compared to those which she suffered during the last eight or nine years of her life; and her torment was the greater as the subjects in which she was tempted were more subtle, spiritual, and divine. She often said to some of her daughters during the latter part of her life; "See, my dear daughters, by the continued violence of my mental temptations and trials, I am now reduced to such a point, that nothing in this world can give me any comfort, save only death; and I search my memory to find how long my father, grandfather, and ancestors lived, in order to comfort my soul with the thought that I shall not have long to remain in this world; I am, however, ready to live as long as God wishes." She fully appreciated these words of a spiritual person, "That there being now no perse-

cution of the Church, we must sacrifice ourselves to life, as the martyrs sacrificed themselves to death;" "and therefore," said she to one of her daughters, "I do not wish any more to think when I shall die, for I feel a great scruple at losing time by considering that my father only lived to his sixty-third year, and that I shall not live longer than he did; it is but a useless consolation." Another time she said, also in confidence, that the horrible and continued torments which she suffered from her temptations were so great, that she felt neither hunger nor thirst, and she would never even have thought of taking any bodily refreshment, had she not been reminded of it. "These assaults are so furious," said she, "that I know not what to do; it seems as if I was about to lose all patience, and to give everything up, and all that I say to others is useless to myself. I never speak of my sufferings, not even to God; it is sufficient for me to know that His goodness knows and sees all."

She also said that the more she was assaulted interiorly, the stronger she felt herself in body, which was a new martyrdom to her; one of her daughters asked her if she never confessed these great temptations and interior pains; she replied in the negative, having no knowledge of having consented, that the only effect produced by her trials was to make her suffer, and that while she was superioress, she never spoke at all of her temptations, save to a few good souls for their instruction and consolation under their own. She said that she had rested on those words of

the Rule, which says in accordance with Holy Writ, "He who neglects his way shall perish;" that her way was always to look at God, and to allow Him to do as He would, without looking at herself or curiously examining what was passing in her soul; that when she had a superioress, she ever felt great comfort in following her direction; that beyond that she sought for none, except in the instructions of our Blessed Father.

She once said to one of her daughters in the spirit of maternal confidence; "God has given me from my very infancy such a love for the faith, that I have offered Him my blood a thousand times in its defence; His goodness has not found me worthy of this, but His justice has allowed such a cruel tyrant of temptations to enter into me, that there is not an hour in the day when I would not willingly change it for the loss of my life; and before meeting our Blessed Father, and being under his holy direction, I thought I should have lost my mind, because being greatly disturbed at it, I forgot to eat, drink, and sleep."

Our dear Mother Péronne Marie de Châtel left the following written among some copies of letters of our Blessed Mother: "All the daughters of this worthy Mother would have been in great apprehension and pain, had they been aware of the interior martyrdom through which she passed, and that day and night, in and out of prayer, at work and at rest, her heart was under the infliction of an interior martyrdom, which was known to her superioress alone, who could not hear it spoken of without being moved to most tender

compassion; although on the other hand she had the highest idea of the designs which God had on the soul of this dear Mother, in making her pass by so strait a way." Being so sorely pressed by temptations and evil thoughts, she was fearful lest her spirit, wearied by the long continuance of the trial, might commit some faults, and therefore asked Mother de Châtel, if she advised her to bind herself by a vow not to look at or reply, voluntarily or otherwise, to her temptations. Our dear Mother de Châtel has left it in writing, that she would not permit her to make this vow for her whole life, but in the morning for the whole day; and she made this vow every morning at her exercise. This was in the year 1636; we do not know whether our Blessed Mother continued this practice for the remainder of her life.

In the same year 1636, during the Octave of Corpus Christi, our Blessed Mother desiring to give an account of her soul to our good Mother de Châtel, that dear Mother, with her usual frankness, and being besides very glad to know and treasure up all that she could, said to her, "I have not time now, but I beg you to put down for me on a bit of paper the state of your heart." Our Blessed Mother obeyed in simplicity, and wrote on the back of a letter, which we preserve as a precious relic, the following words: "I write of God, and I speak of Him as if I felt everything; and that because I desire and believe in this good, as it seems to me, above my suffering and affliction, and do not desire anything

but the treasure of faith, hope, and charity, and to do all that I may know God wishes me to do. I have had occasional respites since Easter, that is, from my anguish, and such frequent bad thoughts; and have more repose in the simple view of God; however, as regards the subject of my trial, I always see it within me, and ever from time to time the anguish returns; but my soul is in her simple retreat, where the blows fall around her like hail, while God prevents her from regarding anything; she dwells in peace, but is much wearied. Sometimes she is alarmed, and looks about to see if she can apply any remedy, but finds none. Now until she throws herself into the merciful arms of her God, without any act of her own, for I can make none, which pains me much, she is wholly occupied with cutting off all reflection; it is an inexplicable torment, which, however, does not prevent my application, nor hinder me from writing, speaking of business, or other things, notwithstanding that my trouble, when it is severe, is nearly always before my eyes. This makes me long for death, fearing lest the long continuance of my suffering should make me fall. I should wish to be in Purgatory, in order not to offend God, and to be certain of being united to Him eternally; but I do not allow this wish, for provided that God be not offended in all this, and that it be His good pleasure that I should suffer all my life, I am content to do so, provided also that I know what He desires me to do, and am faithful in doing it. Sometimes, nay often, my mind is

a chaos of darkness, impotence, thoughts, emotions, doubts, waverings, and many other miseries. When the trial is at its height, these are almost continual, which causes me inconceivable pain, and I know not what I would not do to be freed from this torment; on one side, the trial presses me, and on the other, I have such a love for this holy Faith, that I would willingly lay down my life for the least tittle of it. When I see every one enjoying this happiness, it is a martyrdom for me to feel myself deprived of it, as well as of the confidence and repose which I formerly tasted in abandoning myself entirely into the hands of God and His Providence. When I consider these privations, though ever so little, it places me in a labyrinth; if God did not keep me, I seem to be on the brink of despair, and yet I cannot despair, nor would I wish to be liberated from my sufferings, if I am assured that it is God's will that I should remain in them; and I am even unable to accept the evil which the temptation presents to me, but this inability I do not recognize while the trial lasts, but only afterwards, when I know that God has supported me; then, sometimes, I enjoy a little interior peace and sweetness, though very little, and have ardent desires not to offend God, and to do all the good that I can."

In these words did our Blessed Mother express herself; and she was always able to do this, either with respect to her graces and sweetnesses, or to her pains and sufferings which were so severe. One of our sisters who slept near her

has stated, that hearing her sometimes turn and sigh during the night, she would go and enquire if she was ill: "No, not as to the body," was her reply, "but pray for me, I am in great distress and anguish of spirit." Amidst the loss of all other consolations, lights, and interior supports, there had always remained to her a sweet affection for spiritual reading; but He who desired to possess this noble soul utterly divested of everything, deprived her also of this satisfaction, and permitted that she should have so great a disgust and aversion for reading, that she said in confidence to one of her daughters, that in only hearing the reading at table, every word seemed like a dart which pierced her very heart. She was by this fresh trial so utterly deprived of all enjoyment, that she said that her soul was like a person who was always in an agony from being unable to eat anything whatever.

When in 1641, the last year of her life, she prepared to resign her office as superior, one of her daughters enquiring why she did so, this Blessed Mother said to her, "My daughter, I will mention the external reasons for it in community, but here is one which is peculiar, and which ought to make you consent to my being deposed, if only through compassion; it is that my soul is in so miserable and wretched a state, that I am immediately attacked by all the spiritual temptations, trials, and aversions, about which my daughters consult me; God enables me to speak to and console them, and I myself remain in my misery; ought I not then to desire to be in the

hands of a good superioress, who may guide me in this dangerous state and most painful blindness?" When our dear Mother Marie Aimée de Blonay had arrived in this monastery after the election, wishing to speak of her interior to our Blessed Mother, she began to speak of some trials which she had had in past days. Our saint said to her, with clasped hands, and tears in her eyes, "My very dear Mother, I beseech you not to go on, I shall be overwhelmed by this temptation, I see it coming, I am already attacked." She had copied out with her own hand in two places the following words from Cardinal Bellarmine, in order to read them the more often: "There is no more safe and sure conduct, or truer assurance of salvation, than in the performance of the will of God, which is signified to us by our superiors; should it please our Creator and Redeemer to put us into anguish and dangers, who are we to dare to say to Him, Why have you thus treated us?" Our Blessed Mother greatly loved these words, and we may say of her fidelity, without wishing to make comparisons, that which was said of the holy and patient Job, *that he offended not nor sinned in his sufferings;* which is true of our Blessed Mother, since she, who had so pure a conscience, was never able to remark in all her trials the slightest consent, which she could venture in truth to mention in holy confession, which is the true place of simplicity and truth.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

OF THE SUPERNATURAL AND EXTRAORDINARY FAVOURS AND GRACES WHICH OUR BLESSED MOTHER RECEIVED.

There is no spring, however fresh and beautiful, which is not followed by a hot summer; nor any autumn, however agreeable, which is not succeeded by unpleasant winter; and I think that there is no one, who is ever so little acquainted with spirituality, who does not know that we are not always in the same state; those of our Blessed Mother were very different, and we may say that she had great goods and great evils; but that everything went well with her, because in everything she constantly loved and laboured.

We will not here speak in detail of all the extraordinary graces whch our Blessed Mother received from the divine liberality, as the rapture in which she saw our Blessed Father, the vision of the gate of St. Claude, and that of that multitude of virgins and women who came to her, and whom God placed under her direction; that of those three pilgrims who disappeared after she had given them her ring, which she had kept for the love of her husband; and the rapture which she had when she saw the pleasure which God takes in a pure soul. We will here speak of some other graces which we could not easily

introduce in our history; her great gift of purest contemplation deserves well to be considered; that cessation of interior operations by an immersion of her soul in the Divinity; that fire of love which supported her, and of which she often spoke to certain souls in confidence, especially to our Mother de Châtel, to whom she gave an account of herself as to her superior; all these prove that she had received a grace of God, which made her vigorous in mind amidst her weakness of body, so that it seemed to her in the first years of religion, as if her body were as a stranger associated with her, and as if she would never have thought of it, if she had not, by a well-ordered charity, attended to its necessities.

She also told her that from the year 1615 to 1619, she felt at all the daily communions which she made, an interior heat about her heart, so great that she could scarcely bear it, and that she had first received this grace on communicating between Annecy and Lyons, when she was going there to make the foundation. "At that time," said she, "I was full of the fervour of my vow to do always what I knew to be the most perfect; it seemed as if at every communion this fire burned and consumed something of my interior imperfections." Our Mother de Châtel replied to her, "Our Lord acted towards you like a good father of a family, who sets fire to his field to burn the thorns, that it may only produce good grain. "That is true," said our Blessed Mother, "but with this difference, that

thorns crackle and make a great noise in burning, and the interior fire, which I felt, acted with great tranquillity and sweetness."

She often heard, even with her bodily ears, a sweet and agreeable voice, which instructed her in a few words. The first time she heard it, that we know of, was when she was praying God to give her a director, when it was said to her; "Persevere, and I will give you one." She persevered in asking for him with ardour and many tears, and he was shown to her in a vision with these words, "This is the man in whose hands you must place your conscience." Another time she was told in an ecstasy, "As my Son was obedient, so I intend you to be obedient." While praying at Grenoble for our Blessed Father, (he was already dead, but she did not know it,) she heard a voice which said to her distinctly, "He is no more." The year after his death, praying before his tomb, the same voice said to her, "Your hearts are always united, as to the object of their union, but the one enjoys and the other must suffer;" whereby she comprehended the glory and felicity of our Blessed Father, and saw that she herself had still much to suffer. At the conclusion of a Novena, which she had made to the Blessed Virgin, on account of her sufferings from her interior impotence, she heard these words: "It does not belong to you to work in your interior, but you must leave it to the Divine Master, who has no need of you to assist Him in His work." She wrote the following words after this favour: "O God, I give

myself up to Thee, grant that I may in truth be able to say, it is no more I who work in me, but my Saviour, into whose hands I have committed myself." On the 8th of June, 1636, while praying in the Oratory of our Blessed Father with great anguish, on account of her temptations, she heard this sweet voice, which said to her distinctly, "Read the eighth book of the Confessions of St. Augustine." We have found this in the handwriting of our Mother de Châtel, who adds that our Blessed Mother found in this reading consolation and diversion from her pains. After the death of our Mother de Châtel, as our Blessed Mother was filled with anguish, at being deprived of so dear a support, the same voice said to her one morning when she was quite awake, "Read the thirty-seventh chapter of the third book of the Imitation of Jesus Christ." We have found it in the writing of our Mother de Châtel, in her *Memoirs*, that on Good Friday, 1637, while praying with great fervour, that if it could be done without opposing the Divine Will, the chalice of her interior sufferings might be removed from her, the voice said to her, "What! the man of sorrows was not heard; do not thou think to be so." I cannot at all say what this voice was.

CHAPTER XXIX.

OF HER ABANDONMENT TO GOD AND HIS DIVINE PROVIDENCE.

This perfect abandonment of herself into the hands of God, was the very marrow of our Blessed Mother's interior life; it was her attrait from the very commencement, and she made spiritual exercises expressly for this entire sacrifice of her free will and divestment of herself, to which she had put herself under a solemn obligation. She asked our Blessed Father to celebrate its renewal annually in these words: "You must ask your dear lord if he thinks it good that you should renew to him every year your vows and general abandonment into the hands of God. You must particularly specify whatever touches you most, in order at last to make your self-abandonment perfect and without exception, so that you may be able in truth to say; "I live, now not I, but Jesus Christ liveth in me;" and for this you must ask your good lord not to spare you, nor permit you to make any reserve, either little or great; and to mark the daily exercises and practices required for this purpose, in order that this abandonment may be really and truly made." Our Blessed Father wrote at the bottom of the page, "I reply in the name of our Lord and His Blessed Mother, that it will be good, my

dear daughter, for you to make the proposed renewal, and to renew the perfect abandonment of yourself into the hands of God. For this purpose I will not spare you, and on your part you will retrench all superfluous words respecting the love, though just, of creatures, especially of your relations, houses, country, and above all, of your father, and as far as you can, all long thoughts of all these things, except when duty compels you to order or arrange necessary business, in order to practise these words perfectly, "Hearken, O daughter, and attend, and incline thine ear, and forget thy people, and thy father's house." Before dinner, before supper, and in the evening before going to bed, examine your actions to see if you can say, "I live, now not I, but Jesus Christ liveth in me." She faithfully practised and continued this exercise, and at last arrived at the point which our Blessed Father had predicted to her, a perfect and entire divestment of everything. God laid His hand upon her to despoil and strip her of all that could give her satisfaction and support, either interior or exterior, in order that she might follow and imitate Jesus Christ in His nakedness. The more she acquired virtues by a constant and faithful practice of them, the more our Lord despoiled her of them, so that as if she had never done or acquired anything, she always saw herself poor and naked, and thus gave up to God both herself and her perfection.

The more this holy soul did great things for God, and the more His goodness permitted her

perfection to shine brightly in the eyes of all the world, the more did He conceal it from herself, and that so absolutely, that when she was universally regarded as a saint, she saw herself devoid of every virtue, and trembled at the judgments of God, believing herself to be unworthy of His mercies. God, like a loving master, to try the faithful love of His servant, after having given her many graces, joys, and sweetnesses, deprived her of them all, as if she had been a bad manager of them; in this also she abandoned herself to His guidance. We have found the following in her own handwriting; "After the evening prayer I saw that God had taken back to Himself all the virtues and graces His goodness had formerly vouchsafed to me, and that I also must take refuge in Him." She remained thus in her pliant way, constant in good, and content with the will of God, retired in God, in her abandonment and resignation of all things. She wore during her life, and wished to wear after her death, the following words, written with her own hand, and signed with her blood: "I beseech thee, O Eternal Father! in the name of Thy Son Jesus, to take into Thy hands the free will which Thou hast bestowed on me, and of which I now divest myself. I abandon it entirely and unreservedly to Thy holy disposition, in order that it may please Thee, and I beseech Thee, by the precious blood of Thy Son, that it may never be left to my disposal to do anything contrary to Thy will. I renew with all my heart the entire abandonment which

I made within Thy hands, of all that I am, and of all things, without any reserve, as Thy Majesty well knoweth, having so often renewed it, and especially this last Good Friday, 1637, abandoning and depositing anew in the bosom of Thy protection, and the secret recesses of the fidelity of Thy holy love, the precious treasure of faith, hope, and charity, which Thy grace has conferred on me, for the achievement of my eternal salvation, and for the repose and interior peace of my soul; my consolations and satisfactions, my reflections on all that passes within me, the desire of being delivered from my interior trials, and, in a word, all things without exception, desiring to plunge and lose myself in the bosom of Thy paternal Providence, and to leave myself entirely to the care of Thy love, desiring by means of Thy holy grace no more to see or regard anything that passes within me, but only Thee, in order to repose on Thee, and simply trust myself to Thee; not for the sake of the happiness of trusting in Thee, but because it is Thy holy will, which Thou hast made known to me by Thy divine attraits, and by the counsels of my Blessed Father, to whom, by the assistance of Thy holy grace, I will be faithfully obedient. I abandon from this moment all that may happen to me hereafter to Thy care, and now as well as then, I recommend all the most difficult and terrible events to the secret dispositions of Thy Providence, not desiring in any way to examine into them, but sweetly to do in them whatever I may be able; leaving to Thee the care of all, and abandoning myself

to Thy Divine Will for time and eternity. And since it hath pleased Thee, O my God, that I should have no other arm to lean upon but Thine, and Thy providence, conduct me Thyself, my dear Master, in this holy path; do with me as Thou pleasest, and grant that I may die to myself, and to all things, in order to live to Thee alone, my only life; and accomplish in me Thy eternal designs, without my putting any obstacles to them." This prayer is somewhat long, but it is so devout that I should have been sorry to omit it."

Her abandonment was entire and true, and her love for divine Providence real and solid. She was delighted when she could speak on this holy Providence; she had often in her mouth those words of Scripture, "Eternal Father, Thy Providence governeth all things," and under this government she abode in peace. She had requested the Rev. Father Bertrand, Vice-Rector of the College of the holy Society of Jesus at Chambéry, to write out for her the chief sentences of Scripture, respecting Divine Providence; he did so, and our saint made in her own dear handwriting a little extract of them, for she loved such abridgments, and concluded it with this thought, which she used most familiarly in her conversation, "Divine Providence guides us with all wisdom, power, and goodness; I believe, then, that the soul that trusts to it entirely will never perish, neither through weakness, for the Omnipotent defends it, nor through ignorance, for the Eternal Wisdom teaches it; nor through malice, for Goodness Himself directs it."

Our saint had no curiosity as to the future, so that she was wont to say, "I am well pleased that the lot of man is uncertain, and that in almost everything we can only trust in Him whose Providence is infallible," She took occasion from everything, trees, herbs, flowers, &c., to speak of this holy Providence. At the time that the plague was in this city, they desired to pull up a quantity of white lilies which grew in our cloister garden, because it is said that their scent is too strong for times suspected of contagion, but our Blessed Mother begged them not to destroy them all, "Because," said she, "it is a great consolation for us when we pass by the cloister, to remember that the Providence of our heavenly Father keeps these lilies more beautifully clad than Solomon and all his glorious court." In prosperity, in unhappy events or unpleasant news, in a word, in all circumstances our Blessed Mother had always the words "Providence, Providence, and the will of God" on her lips, and she often repeated them, without adding anything more ; and it could be easily perceived that her heart was annihilating itself, and adoring in humble submission this divine Providence.

She spared neither pain, trouble, nor holy prudence to avoid temporal evils, perils, and losses, but if any of these happened, she rested so absolutely in the divine good pleasure, that her thoughts were wholly absorbed by it, and it was a lesson which she continually practised and taught, never to look at second causes in anything that happens to us, but only at the first

universal cause. Our dear sister, the superioress of Turin, Madeleine Elizabeth de Lucinge, who often accompanied her in her travels, wrote to us that sometimes she had been astonished at seeing our Blessed Mother not in the least frightened at difficult roads and fearful precipices, and she once said to her, "My Mother, how can you help trembling? I shudder with fear at the sight of those roads." Our Blessed Mother, with a smile, said to her, "My dear daughter, a little sparrow does not fall into the hunter's net without the Providence of our heavenly Father; how much more will a reasonable creature not fall into a precipice without His order; if He has ordered it, what more have we to say?" The holy presence of God in every place, and His continual providence over His creatures, were in her heart like two eyes which guided her in all her actions. She delighted exceedingly in those two Psalms of David, "Domine probasti me," &c., and "Dominus regit me," &c. She said them occasionally on Festivals in Latin through devotion, and frequently sang them in verse according to the translation of Desportes; and she wrote the following verses in her little book:—

Dieu governe cet univers
Par sa très sage Providence,
Et par des conseils fort divers
Surpassant notre intelligence.

A Dieu seul convient d'arrêter
Ce qu'il veut pour sa créature,
Laquelle aussi doit supporter
Tout ce qu'il lui plait qu'elle endure.

De notre vie tout le bien
Est en la volonté divine ;
Et lorsqu'elle s'accomplit bien,
Là notre bonheur se termine.

The thought has come into my mind, that the heart of our Blessed Mother was that house which the Divine Wisdom had built, supported by seven columns, which were the seven vows which she made, viz., poverty, chastity, particular obedience to our Blessed Father as regarded her interior, to do always that which was most perfect, to say her beads every day, and to honour the Blessed Virgin, and, lastly, not to think of her temptations either little or much.

CHAPTER XXX.

OF HER ENLIGHTENMENT AND SOLIDITY IN THE DIRECTION OF SOULS.

God who had chosen our Blessed Mother to be the directress of many souls in His holy love, and in the pure spiritual life, taught her by her own experience what she was to teach others; for one can travel much more securely under a guide who has already gone the same road, than under one who has only learned it by maps and descriptions of the country. There are some holy souls who have been elected for perfection by a prompt and pure grace, in such a way, that though in possession of perfection, they are not

fitted to guide others, as I have heard our Blessed Mother say; these souls are simply for God, and for themselves, but our worthy Mother, who was predestined also for the good of her neighbour, was made by God to pass through almost all the interior states; there was no way, however secret, no road, however retired, no path, however narrow and obscure in the interior life, with which she was not acquainted.

We have heard from a great servant of God that whatever degree of prayer, of sublime union, of purified love, or of interior suffering, was spoken of to our Blessed Mother, it was seen that the penetrating eye of her soul, illuminated by God, perfectly understood the proposition; so that, generally speaking the soul who spoke to her felt, by an interior correspondence, that she not only taught by a science infused from heaven, but also by her own experience.

She said there were two secrets, for directing souls well; the first, to know well the attrait of God in each soul, and to make them know it; the second, to act on souls for the interest of God alone, without desiring to make them appreciate our maxims, esteem our direction, or attach themselves to us with any particular affection, and she said that God had granted her this grace of having no design or desire to acquire the affections of creatures, inasmuch as it ought to be sufficient that God has commanded all to love their neighbour. One day, while instructing one of her daughters, who had been asked for by some convent as superioress,

she urged her, above all things to apply herself with great care, when she should be in office, to the interior guidance of her community. "Avoid," said she, "a failing which I have known; some superiors wish to lead their subjects by their own way, thus, for instance, one who goes by the path of interior colloquies, wishes to lead all her daughters to practise them; another, whose attrait is to simplicity and divestment, desires to put her subjects into this way; those who use considerations, desire all to make interior acts; now, this is rather to turn back souls than to direct them." "I have known," she said, "unmortified and imaginative spirits, who imagine themselves to be in states in which they are not at all; I make no scruple of turning them away from these, however much they may wish to make me believe that it is their attrait and their way, for this is to turn them away from themselves to lead them to God; whereas, on the other hand, when we see a daughter of solid virtue, if we wish to change her way, it is turning her away from the operation of God, and turning her to her own operation, by which great wrong is done her. In order to keep the souls under her charge more encouraged, she did not appear to make much account of extraordinary things, or of the ways which seem most elevated; she showed just as much esteem for the more humble states, saying that it showed great ignorance in the guidance of souls to make so much of one way, and so little of the others; that as for herself, she did

not call any state low but that of sin and imperfection.

A sister once told her that some spiritual persons had urged her to turn from a very good idea which she had had, and told her that she ought to apply herself more immediately to God. Our Blessed Mother replied; "May God pardon them for their advice; we should never give such advice, unless we have a full and thorough knowledge of the souls to which we give it; we should not indifferently say things of this sort to all souls, because they easily believe us; it is for God to attract souls to supernatural states, and not for men to drive them into them." She said that the way of good thoughts and holy conceptions is not at all opposed to the prayer of quiet and of simple repose; that when God gives them to a soul without her being at much trouble to invent them, it is as if He presented her a plank by which to arrive easily at the haven of sacred interior repose, in which, after having praised God in His work, our attention is directed to the workman; that those who were enlightened in the interior way of our holy Founder would see that it was his; everything led him to God, and his holy thoughts on these occasions were most frequent.

She wrote thus to one of her daughters: "Follow your attrait, do not shut the ears of your heart to that sweet voice of all rational and irrational creatures, nor of those which have only being; when you hear their mute language, listen to it; their harmony passes away, but the

knowledge obtained from it remains, and is of much use to many souls." One thing that was most admirable in this great directress of souls, was that, though she had attained to so high a degree of contemplation, and a sight of God so simple, and free from all sensible images and acts, she was able to give advice as easily for the first rudiments of beginners, and for the advancement of those who had made some progress, as for the perfection of those who were already stepping from one height of perfection to another. She had a wonderful light in discerning the way of God in each soul, and in knowing when an attrait was from God or from self-love; she saw whether the lights they said they had received were from the angel of light or the angel of darkness. She told souls with the greatest candour of the defect or deceit which she discovered in them, and made no account of anything but that which brought humility to the soul, and which rendered it virtuous and united to God. Her zeal was most ardent for the welfare and advancement of souls, but she did not burden them with counsels, nor urge them on but with sweetness; she knew that this often oppresses instead of advancing them.

A good soul thinking one day of our Blessed Mother, to whom all sorts of persons addressed themselves to be directed in the way of perfection, represented her as one who from a high tower sees travellers coming from different places to ask their road, and who directs them without moving from his place, saying to them; "Go

you to the East, you to the West, and that other to the South; that so our Blessed Mother had by many divine graces and many labours and much fidelity on her part, arrived at the summit of the high tower of perfection; that from thence, without moving from her place, she could see, most clearly the various roads which those who came to consult her should take, and answer them accordingly. I remember that a very spiritual person having lent a book on interior self-denial to another, our worthy Mother said to her, "This is very bad; in the state in which this soul is, this reading will throw her into trouble and difficulty, because these counsels are not proper to strengthen her in the way in which God draws her. It happened as she had said, and this person came and placed herself in the hands of our Blessed Mother for enlightenment, which she speedily gave her, having received the grace to do so.

She knew at once when a sister was walking simply or using artifice. In one of our houses, a sister pretended that the devils prevented her from eating unless relics were applied to her with much ceremony, which was done carefully and in good faith, but our Blessed Mother immediately discovered the deceit, and said that she would herself apply the relics. She folded a bit of wood in paper, placed it on the head of the nun, who was apparently in a faint, whereupon she immediately returned to herself, saying that the relics had chased away the devils; she arose and ate very heartily, but our Blessed Mother

showed her that she had discovered her artifice, and gave her a penance. On entering a convent, one of the sisters said to her, "My Mother, I have seen your guardian angel, who has cured me of a temptation that I had to wish to be employed in offices of consequence;" to which our Blessed Mother, perceiving that she spoke deceitfully, replied, "Follow, then, the grace, my daughter, and ask your superior never to give you any but trivial employments; I feel sure that she will grant your petition;" a reply which so wounded the sister, that it soon showed that her humility was feigned and not holy. How many persons did she disabuse, as much regarding the graces which they believed they had, as with respect to the trials in which they feigned to be! the former deceived through ignorance, the latter, through malice. When the trials were genuine, she took inconceivable care in succouring souls, as she knew how weighty this burden was. She declared that when souls communicated themselves to her, God made her feel towards those who acted sincerely with her a certain opening of her heart, by which she was more thoroughly acquainted with the state of those souls than by their very words, but that when they acted deceitfully with her, she felt it, because God withdrew her attention, and did not inspire her with anything to say to such souls.

CHAPTER XXXI.

HER ADVICE AND MAXIMS, ESPECIALLY ON PRAYER.

Our Blessed Mother made no account in the spiritual life of anything but solid virtue, and was wont to say, "I have met with so much vanity, so much sensuality, such facility in imagining, and such weakness in believing, in the human mind, that I am not easily affected by extraordinary actions, unless I see a true and solid virtue." A superioress once sent her a long narration of some extraordinary graces which one of her subjects had received, to which our Blessed Mother thus replied; "You have sent me the leaves of the tree, send me a little of its fruit, in order that I may judge of it, for, for my own part, I think very little of the leaves; now the fruits of a good heart, which God waters and makes to flourish by His grace, are a complete forgetfulness of self, a great love of self-annihilation, and an universal joy without any exception in the goods and happiness of our neighbour.

Another of our sisters superioresses told her that she had a novice who was in the habit of fainting during prayer, and who could not take recreation, nor do her work, through the greatness of the interior attraits which she said she felt; our Blessed Mother answered her in these words; "I have just communicated for your

novice, my very dear daughter, and I will tell you sincerely that she deceives herself; look on the following maxim as inviolable; these extraordinary graces are loving transformations in God, in which the soul should say, 'I live, now not I, Jesus liveth in me.' Now if Jesus lives in the soul, He infallibly brings into it simplicity and humility, for He is God and man; as God, He is an act altogether pure and simple, and as man, He is all humility and lowliness, and the more He unites the soul to Himself, the more vile does she appear in her own eyes, and the more desirous does she become of living unknown and despised."

Our Blessed Mother did not like any to enter of their own accord into supernatural prayer, and she gave some excellent signs to know when this state comes from God, and not from self-love. The following, eight in number, were written by her to a religious of our congregation. "Yes, most willingly, my dear daughter, will I endeavour to give you some signs by which you will see if your repose and quiet are good and from God: 1. See, my very dear daughter, if though you have prepared your points of prayer like the community, you cannot use them, but feel that without any artifice on your part, or on that of those who direct yours, your heart, your mind, and your inmost soul, are sweetly drawn to this sacred repose, peaceably enjoying Him whom you have so ardently desired by divine grace for so many years. 2. If you remark that this attrait leads you to littleness and self-abasement. 3. If

you learn in these sweetnesses and this holy repose to belong to God alone, to obey Him and your superiors in all things without any exception; if you learn there to depend wholly on Divine Providence, and to desire nothing but His holy will. 4. If this repose takes from you all affection or attachment to creatures and earthly objects, and makes you quit them in order to unite yourself only to the love of the Creator; for, my daughter, it is not reasonable that the soul which takes delight in tasting God, should seek also to enjoy things that are low and less than God. 5. If it leads you to know yourself better, to be simple, sincere, true, and candid, in a word, like a little child. 6. If, notwithstanding the consolation which you enjoy from this sweet repose, you are not ready to return to imaginations, reflections, and even drynesses, should such be God's will. 7. If you are not more patient and humble in suffering your infirmities; if you are not even desirous of suffering more, without caring for any other satisfaction, than to content your Spouse. 8. Examine briefly, simply, and in general, if your attrait and loving sleep make you despise still more the world, and your own vanity and private interests; in a word, if it does not seem to put the world, and all its glory, and your own self beneath your feet, and if it does not induce you to esteem above all things contempt, simplicity, humility, labour, and the cross. For the rest, my dear daughter, I consider, in truth, your attrait to be good and from God, and do not trouble yourself about

nourishing your soul, for this sleep is better than all other food, and I tell you, that although your soul seems to be asleep, she still continues to take nourishment and to eat, yea, a most excellent and delicate food; but she is so attentive to the loving Jesus who feasts her, that she does not think of the delicacies which He gives her, and it is well that she does so, for if she acted otherwise, she would be in danger of losing her position."

Our Blessed Mother used to say and repeat on almost all occasions that the single practice of the presence of God, and a retrenchment of all useless reflections, could in a short time perfect a soul.

She wrote to a superioress; "Teach your daughters faithfully preparation, meditation, affections, and resolutions, in prayer, in order to allow God to act; if His Goodness wills that they should know anything else, He will teach it them. Whoever is faithful in withdrawing his thoughts from all things to occupy himself with God, may be certain that God is faithful, and will Himself occupy him.

One of the things which causes me much pain is to hear so many speak of prayer, interior favours, extraordinary graces, and not speak with the same ardour of pure virtue and solid mortifications. The soul who endeavours more to rise in elevated thoughts, and to enjoy interior repose than to humble herself, and to be perfectly obedient and poor, knows not what it is to imitate Jesus Christ. He who does not practise the virtues when he has opportunities, annihilates

them in himself; we may work miracles, but if we do not practise virtue we are not servants of God.

I have seen several spiritual persons laugh at me when I recommended to our sisters the holy fear of God; it is a virtue which I esteem so much, that if I followed my inclination I should speak of it on all occasions and to every soul, no matter how elevated she might be in the spiritual life, for if she has not filial fear, she will without doubt fall into sin."

On occasion of certain praises, she said; "If I knew that vanity had entered into any convent, and that they made a parade of the powers of this world, and were puffed up with the favour of the great, I should be tempted to ask of God fire from heaven to destroy that house, and to purge the Institute of it; it may be said to me that I know not what spirit I am of, but if they knew the humility which God requires of the sisters of this congregation, and how much those who are lifted up, and make a parade of worldly things, oppose the Spirit of God, they would be on my side. Nothing would be more likely to shorten my days than to see vanity and disunion among the daughters of Mary.

I have always remarked that God does not impart the secrets of heaven, nor the solid delight of His love to the soul who delights in the news of the world, and who attaches herself to the love of creatures."

Our Blessed Mother often spoke of those words of the Gospel, "Narrow is the path which leadeth

to life; oh! how few there are that enter therein." There is nothing, she would say, which ought to render us so exact as the thought, "Oh! how few enter therein!"

She used to say, "My advice and my desires are asked by all our houses; for myself I know nothing, nor have I any other desire but that they should be faithful to observance; this is the desire and design of God upon our souls. I am sometimes very much afraid lest through the multitude of houses which are established, their spirit may be relaxed, from not having subjects and superiors solidly virtuous; but I abandon everything to God's holy providence. Certainly if we do not take care, and do not consider well if we are able to found new houses. we shall be building many dove-cotes, where our doves will die of hunger, both spiritually and temporally. Let us not rejoice in a human way at the good reception which our congregation meets with, but let us humble ourselves and glorify God for it.

I have not so much pleasure in hearing our Blessed Father very much praised, as in seeing persons imitate his virtues; words fly away, but virtuous actions are lasting.

On the occasion of some elections of superiors, she said; O Jesus! how much do I dislike that restless search which our daughters make for Mothers of great ability and experience; do you not see that this imaginary belief, that great abilities are necessary to superiors, entirely ruins the pure perfection of obedience, for it is easy to obey

an angel, and difficult to obey a man; we must indeed choose a good superioress, but to pass over several good ones, who have moderate talents, to make an anxious search after others from a distance, who may be more excellent and attractive, is what greatly displeases me. If the youngest of our professed sisters was given me as a superioress, I should love her with all my heart.

Writing to one of our superioresses, she said to her; "My dear daughter, take courage; if you are humble and devout, God will do wonders in you, and in your daughters; only take these for indispensible maxims; that the spiritual exercises be faithfully observed, and that the letter of the Rule be vivified by the spirit; be neither quarrelsome nor extravagant in temporal matters, but be very careful and very discreet, and also very charitable to the poor. As to the guidance of your sisters, be impartial in your affection, but treat every one in particular according to the gifts of nature and of grace, which God has bestowed on her, and employ them in offices according to these, and not according to their wishes and fancies.

Our Blessed Mother had a great dislike to any one wishing for offices, and said that a sister could not give a greater mark of her incapacity, than when she believed herself capable, because none are worthy of serving in the house of God but those who are humble, devout, and mortified. "Humility," said she, "makes us look on ourselves as insufficient for everything; devotion

makes us love our cells and our silence; mortification makes us avoid amusements and pleasures of sense. I have spoken to great queens and princesses, to noble lords and ladies, but I have never seen any who had not sharp thorns in their hearts, under their dresses covered with gold and silver, or who enjoyed that absolute calm and sweet peace which I generally see in our poor and humble religious. I thought this morning that there was nothing so happy under the sun as a religious, who loves God, her superior, and her cell. The daughters of the Visitation will never perish for want of instruction for our Blessed Father has said all that is necesfor us, he has rigged our vessel well, but if the wind of vanity enters into our hearts, it will destroy us. I wish I could write with my blood, to all our houses what our good spiritual Father has said to us. That the general of our order is humility; that if all the convents obey this general well, they will maintain the whole Institute in union and uniformity. If we are humble everywhere, it is all that is requisite. What matters it to a heart which loves God to suffer or to rejoice, provided the will of God be accomplished? Would to God that my lips were pierced with a red-hot iron, so that the lips of the daughters of the Visitation might be for ever closed to the least word against the charity, union, and meekness which ought to be among them."

Our Blessed Mother had also written with her own hand a great number of sentences from

Scripture, especially from the New Testament, which lead the soul to the serious practice of virtue, to fear, to veneration of the judgments of God, to the last great account, and to confidence in His holy Providence. She said that in all reading and sermons we should attach ourselves rather to what was solid, than to what was agreeable. She was extremely pleased with the works of the Rev. Father Rodriquez, and the Rev. Father Dupont, and she used to say, "These are my books, after those of our Blessed Father and the Lives of the Saints."

She had an admirable habit of doing everything in its proper time and place. We have sometimes seen sealed letters lying in her cell for twelve or fifteen days, from persons who were both near and dear to her; we enquired why she did not read them; "I am waiting until it is time to reply to them," said she, "I should have to read them again then, which is only self-satisfaction and loss of time." She was wont to say that superiors should be careful to cultivate well those subjects who were endowed with talents of nature and of grace; God does not perform miracles every day; when He gives these graces to a subject, it is a sign that if they correspond by their virtue, He wishes to be served in a special manner, and in things of importance, by such souls; daughters of good judgment, great humility, and observance, are more precious than gold."

Here I will conclude, and cease to consider in detail the perfections of this *Spouse*, to say that

she was *all beautiful*. We shall not forget, I think, her great recollection which always kept her equally retired in herself, whether she was in joy or suffering; that great gift for every kind of business, with such a readiness that occasionally she made three of us write on different subjects at the same time. She dictated the most important letters with as much facility as she spoke of other things; and afterwards, if her secretary had omitted anything, or added anything of her own, were it ever so little, she said, "This is not my style, but yours is better." Let us remember also her firmness and equanimity in all circumstances, her countenance always inflamed with love, always sweet, always recollected, so that no matter how severe her trials and interior disgusts might be, no one ever perceived them, except those of our sisters, to whom in her holy goodness, she thought fit to relate some part of them, for their good and instruction. Let us call to mind her modesty, as great in her old age as in a young virgin, her hatred and aversion to all praises, or display, or news of the world, her great love for poverty, humility, and simplicity of life; her general forgetfulness of all things and of herself through the continual remembrance of God, her inviolable exactness in all the little practices of virtue and obedience, her care in guiding her flock into the heart of the wilderness of the interior life, to use the words of the Rev. Father Fichet, that unity which she preserved in her order, and the humility with which she acted, and was the centre of

all, yet totally disengaged from all particular affection; such were the miracles wrought in her, and they were a consummate and perfect virtue. There remain those which she performed in others, and the esteem in which they held her.

THE LIFE

OF

S. ROSE OF VITERBO.

THE LIFE

OF

S. ROSE OF VITERBO.

BOOK I.

CHAPTER I.

ORIGIN OF THE MONASTERY NOW CALLED S. ROSE, AND THE MIRACULOUS BIRTH OF THE SAINT.

We gather from different accounts of Viterbo, that in the year 1200 there did not exist a single convent for women in that town; and that its inhabitants led godless, wicked lives. About this time a pious woman founded an Institution for young girls, which she governed with such devotion and humble trust in God, that in course of time, its inmates lived by rule, as cloistered nuns. For their support they depended alone on alms, and placed themselves under the patronage of S. Damian. To this Institution was shortly added a church and monastery, the first in Viterbo; it bore the name of S. Mary of the Roses, and was close to the city walls, and to the gate now called S. Mark, at present known under the more modern title of S. Rose. The nuns were

called "the poor cloistered women of S. Mary and S. Damian."

In the year 1235, this order of S. Damian was confirmed by Pope Gregory IX., who gave them the title of nuns, and placed them under the rule of S. Benedict, whose habit they adopted, with full privileges, and entire exemption from taxes, and subsidies, even for the use of the Holy See. His Holiness ordered the bishop of Viterbo to release them from all episcopal jurisdiction, spiritual and temporal, leaving them subject only to the Apostolic See, which Bull was confirmed by the consent of the entire chapter given at Viterbo, December the 14th, 1235. In order that the nuns might occasionally inherit the property of their deceased relations, and to secure the same from being usurped by others, Pope Gregory in a Bull, dated Anagni, 13th of September, 1238, in the 12th year of his Pontificate, ordered the bishop of Sutri to see that all such property be secured to the Institution for the benefit of the nuns, and of the monastery in general. For the completion of the church and convent, the same Pontiff granted an indulgence to all the faithful, who, with this intention, should bestow alms on this Institution, as we read in another Bull dated the 17th of September, of the same year 1233, which, together with those named above, are kept in the archives of the convent.

There dwelt a man at Viterbo at this time, close to the monastery of S. Mary of the Roses, who was constantly employed in the convent work; he was poor, but of an honourable and noble family,

and his life was quite exemplary; he had an especial devotion to the holy Baptist, on which account, when his little son was born, he named him John. In due time, this young boy took his share in assisting the holy nuns in their toil, and served them with great love and zeal; he truly followed the footsteps of his father in his love to holy Church, and professed all his virtues and piety, and especially his devotion to his holy patron S. John Baptist, for which reason he was found worthy to be the father of a child born by miracle, just as the saint himself, who was born when his parents were beyond the natural age. He married a holy and devout woman of Viterbo, named Katherine, in which town they lived in humility and patience, following God's precepts, contented in poverty, exercising charity, and every other pious work that leads to Paradise. They were both barren, and had never had any children, nor even did they desire any; but in the early spring of 1240, Katherine, contrary to all expectation, was found to be with child; and whilst her husband's father was still living, under the Pontificate of Gregory IX., she miraculously brought forth a child, full of grace and beauty, just at that sweet season of spring when the roses first bloom; this child was no other than our S. Rose. After her birth, her mother ever continued barren, as she had been before.

It is no cause of wonder that this blessed virgin, whose unexpected birth so much resembled that of the holy Baptist, should always have an extraordinary devotion to S. John, as had been the case

with her pious Catholic ancestors in those sad days when vice and heresy were so prevalent. And truly as a goodly perfect plant must produce a sweet and pleasant flower, so from John and Katherine, those saintly names, which in those dark days, were rarely cared for, nothing could proceed but a lovely fragrant Rose, at a time too when Italy and holy Church were in such extreme need. At this period, the whole of Italy and the Apostolic See were so afflicted and tormented by the sinful persecution of the Emperor Frederic II., that the faithful began to vacillate in their allegiance to the Catholic Church, and under the names of Guelphs and Ghibellines, she was torn by Ecclesiastical and Imperial factions, which infested the Church, and deprived her of her rights.

The people of Viterbo had always been, and were still devotedly attached to the holy Roman Church, and to her chief pastor, as they testified by the solemn rejoicings with which they accompanied his Holiness when he came from Anagni to their city, to oppose the increasing aggressions of the Emperor. But Frederic, well aware how essential it was that he should possess Viterbo in order to subdue the whole province, and to facilitate his passage to Rome, pretended to be very anxious for an interview with Pope Gregory, who was then in that city; he therefore passed through Viterbo on his way, with all his army, where the Cardinal Ramiero Capocci received him as a friend, and lodged him in his own palace, and treated him with great distinction. Here, with a traitor's soul, he flattered the nobility, and subdued the popu-

lace by threats, so that by captivating the one, and alarming the other, he made himself absolute master of all. Other places belonging to holy Church he conquered by force of arms, and thus obliged the Pope to take up the cross against him, and excommunicate him as a sacrilegious man, and a rebel to the Apostolic See. Thus the miserable town, become a slave to Frederic, was crowded with strangers and enemies, and converted into a receptacle for heresy, and a refuge for criminals, so bitter was the punishment due to its sins. But oh, miracle of mercy! Oh the wonderful grace, the long-suffering of Heaven! Whilst standing with the scourge in his hand, God mercifully listened to the supplications of devout women, and for the sake of their oppressed and guiltless innocence, and at the very time when Viterbo was occupied by Frederic and his troops, in the midst of this horrible state of wickedness, and these sharp thorns of tribulation, it was His will that the holy blessed Rose should be born in the parish of S. Mary on the Hill, just beneath the Palace of the Emperor, and behind the Monastery of S. Mary of the Roses, adjoining which, even now, her house may be seen.

CHAPTER II.

FROM HER INFANCY THIS VIRGIN SHOWED WONDERFUL TOKENS OF HOLINESS.

Unfortunately, owing to the troublous times in which our saint was born, no very precise details have been preserved, so that it is impossible to know all the interesting circumstances which attended her early years. But tradition tells us that her birth, miraculous as it was, on account of her parent's sterility, as well as remarkable for its occurring at the time of the aggressions of the rebel Emperor against the Church, was followed by strange and unusual incidents, but the date of them is uncertain. Immediately after her birth, she was brought to the sacred waters of baptism, where she was made clean from the defilement of original sin; and from that moment the Holy Spirit descended on, and sanctified her, for she showed immediate and evident signs of her justification and holiness, to the wonder not only of her parents, but of all those who were present. She was never heard to scream or cry as other children do; if her mother put her to the breast, she took it; if not, she showed no symptom of impatience, but would tranquilly lie on her mother's lap, looking up to heaven. Scarcely did the blessed child begin to lisp her first words, and to walk with tottering timid steps, when from her

tender lips were heard those sweetest names of Jesus and Mary, and frequently was she found kneeling before their sacred images, and that of S. John Baptist, which were kept in the house, and ever venerated with much devotion, both by her father and mother, as is the case with all devout and pious Catholics. She listened to all they taught her with humility and modesty, obeying them with extraordinary reverence and angelic sweetness, and never grieving them by one act of disobedience. Such indications did she give of her goodness and innocence, such signs of her future sanctity, and of God having chosen and elected her from her cradle, to exalt her by His grace as the rose is exalted above all other flowers, that she might from her tenderest youth, without learning, without strength, make miraculous and signal progress against the enemies of the church, to the glory of Christ Jesus, and to the exaltation of the Catholic faith.

CHAPTER III.

IN HER CHILDHOOD LITTLE BIRDS TAKE REFUGE IN HER BOSOM.

Some meek and lowly creatures there are, who from their very birth seem appointed to a life of poverty and neglect; but, if only cultivated by the hand of the omnipotent God, they will bring

forth the fruit of good works, and of holy deeds. When Rose was born, her parents were very poor, so that with no one to look after her, she was neglected and untaught; but, being cultivated by the Eternal Creator, and irrigated by the dew of His divine grace, from her tenderest youth, signs of God's grace were evidently seen, to the edification and wonder of those around her. She was scarcely two years old when these wonderful acts of virtue and devotion were manifested. Whenever sacred subjects were discussed, she would remain silently listening with the deepest attention; her parents' advice she diligently followed, and with great humility and innocence endeavoured to imitate their holy works; of which God soon afforded a somewhat miraculous proof. One day as the blessed child was sitting in the house with some bread in her hand, several little birds were seen hovering outside the door; they flew into her bosom, and pecked the crumbs which fell from her mouth; this occurred many times, and was witnessed by many persons. The holy infant encouraged their tender caresses, and fed the little birds with her own innocent hands, for the love of Him to whose will they were obedient. They flew away, and returned again and again, to the marvel of those who beheld them.

CHAPTER IV.

HOW FROM HER YOUTH SHE LEARNS TO DESPISE THE WORLD, TO FOLLOW CHRIST.

Worldly men are ever seeking after temporal joys, and pursuing the pleasures of sense, desiring and obtaining all kinds of luxuries and passing delights, without which they cannot be satisfied. Saints, on the contrary, are ever seeking after spiritual joys, and the glories of heaven, they find no time for other pleasures, they despise the world, and hate the things it loves. Our young saint cared not to frequent the world and worldly society to procure happiness or earthly joys, but like a delightful rose, aspiring to bloom again in Paradise, she learned to fly from pomp and vanity, and meekly to follow Jesus Christ. Thus did she daily advance in virtue and in divine wisdom. In the third year of her age, she felt an ardent desire to visit some churches, and particularly one dedicated to S. Francis, of whose saintly life she had heard so much. When there the blessed child adored the presence of Christ in the divine Sacrament with intense devotion, attended to the holy mysteries, and listened to God's word with such attention, retained all she heard in the sermons, and repeated their contents so faithfully, that all who heard her were convinced that she was filled with the Holy Spirit, and taught by God Himself.

As we have already said, her parents were very poor, but her study was to make herself poorer still; her greatest wish was to become a nun, and by this means embrace spiritual poverty also, so that she might inherit heavenly possessions, and consecrate herself to Christ by perpetual virginity, and thus attain the glories of paradise, so often described to her by her virtuous parents. Thus, guided by the blessed John Baptist, amidst the trials and sorrows of the world, did this little child become an enemy to all youthful pastimes and vain amusements, and retiring to the remotest part of the house, would, with a soul inflamed with burning zeal, mortify her innocent body. In order to increase her sufferings, she covered her tender flesh with but one coarse habit, her head was always uncovered, and her hair disordered. Thus would she be attired, and thus did she always continue during the scorching summer heats, and during the bitter winter cold, and all more nearly to resemble her beloved Jesus, and to have no other glory, but that of Christ crucified; for the love of whom she began in childhood and continued till death to macerate and subdue her flesh with perpetual fasts, and constant abstinences, so that it should never dare to rebel against the Spirit.

CHAPTER V.

HOW SHE WAS GIFTED BY GOD WITH SPIRITUAL AND PERSONAL GRACES.

God does not bestow on all the same graces, but divides and distributes them as He wills. When we behold a creature beautiful and perfect in mind and body, how naturally we impute it to God's election, and to the light of God's countenance shining on him. At all events, we are each of us bound to serve God with whatever talent He has bestowed on us. Some there are to whom God has been more bountiful, and to whom He has granted still higher graces, still He is ever the same God, whose works are the perfection of justice, and whose eternal Providence guides and governs all things. The youthful Rose received all the gifts she could desire from God's most liberal hand, and she was ever careful and solicitous to employ them in the service of Him from whom she had received all, and to render to Him a worthy and grateful return, and thus prove herself a devoted and faithful servant of her Creator. With a light and graceful form, and a diminutive stature, her person was very attractive, her complexion was delicate, and she possessed a certain dignity of expression in her countenance, which, in a girl only twelve years old, was very remarkable; but all this was accompanied with

such simplicity, modesty, and purity in her words, in her actions, as well as in her dress and manners, that all who gazed on her sweet holy face and delicate form were struck with admiration, and desired to tread in her steps, and to follow her bright example in leading a life of virtue, and to dedicate themselves to God, as she was doing. And well did the qualities of her soul correspond to these personal graces, for she possessed every virtue which could ennoble a Christian soul in the sight of man, and make it acceptable and pleasing to Almighty God. To these natural gifts of body and soul, were daily added supernatural graces, which were bestowed on her by God's goodness; who chose by her means to manifest to the world the holiness and innocence of a simple young maiden, to the confusion of heretics, who denied the supreme power of the Pope, disturbed the tranquillity of the Church, and inflicted barbarous punishments on Catholics.

CHAPTER VI.

OF HER VIRGINITY, AND THE GRACES BESTOWED UPON HER BY THE HOLY SPIRIT.

Holy and blessed was that mysterious union of mother and son, contracted in virtue of Christ's command by the most blessed Virgin Mary, and S. John, at the foot of the cross, as an eternal memorial of the holy state of virginity, and in

order that the merit due to this virtue, and its acceptability in the sight of the Divine Majesty might be manifested to the world. Angelic Virginity! holy virtue worthy of Paradise! to which, beyond all others, is promised the palm of victory, the glory of eternal salvation! From her childhood Rose valued this precious grace beyond all others, and by it she consecrated herself to her Saviour, so that she might one day join the celestial choir, and render to Him that sweet odour of praise, in which He so much delights. So zealously did she cultivate this sweet virtue, and so great was her modesty, that she was never seen to raise her eyes to the face of any man. She despised all vanity of dress and person, and crucified her flesh by rigorous discipline, generally confining herself to a chamber in the house, and thus she observed the holy precept of S. Jerome, "Let virgins continue in fasting, in humility, and in retirement." Such was the mean opinion she had of herself, that her greatest joy was to be despised and ill-treated even by those inferior to herself; for she knew full well that no treasure could purchase heaven so surely as that of holy humility, and that no virtue was more efficacious and powerful in the sight of the Divine Majesty. The gentle disposition of this young saint could scarcely be surpassed, and with angelic sweetness she would listen to all who were in sorrow or distress, and give them spiritual consolation. She was never known to be disturbed by anger, save in holy zeal for the faith, and for the honour of Christ. She suffered with the greatest courage not only poverty and its conse-

quent trials, but afflictions, fatigues, injuries, and intolerable persecutions. All these wonderful graces were gifts of the Holy Spirit, and made her more beautiful in men's eyes, and more acceptable to God.

CHAPTER VII.

OF THE MANY VIRTUES SHE POSSESSED.

Our hopes of eternal salvation are founded on the three theological virtues; faith, hope, and charity. Faith helps us to believe, without doubting, those things we cannot see, but which in simplicity of mind, and trust in God, we know to be true; to this, hope is always united, and this hope is animated by charity, which is a habit of the will infused by God into our souls, so that we may love Him ardently as the end of our being, and our neighbour as ourselves. Such was the firmness of the blessed Rose in the holy faith, and so great her zeal and ardour, that she frequently confessed it against heretics, fearless of persecution or ill-treatment, and only careful for the honour of God, and the salvation of souls. She had placed all her trust in the Divine mercy, and having no other hope, her sole end was to attain the glory of eternal life. She was ever armed against our three great enemies, the devil, the world, and the flesh, and supported by the four cardinal virtues, which served to render her prudent and just in all her

actions, and strong and constant in seasons of sorrow and persecution. Her life was one continual fast and perpetual vigil, and it is impossible that her strength could have been supported by natural means. She was constant in prayer, in succouring the poor, visiting and consoling the sick and afflicted, in praying for the living and the dead, and for the necessities of the Church; in instructing the ignorant, in converting sinners, and in counselling the doubtful; and these works of mercy were exercised by the holy child with such excessive charity and zeal, that she was venerated as a saint by all who knew her.

CHAPTER VIII.

OF THE SUPERNATURAL GIFTS SHE RECEIVED FROM GOD.

Whenever it pleases God to sanctify any creature in this world, he confers on him a justifying grace, which renders him acceptable to His divine majesty, and to him is granted whilst on earth a beginning of blessedness, as a token of the glory he will finally attain in heaven. This grace, called by theologians, *Gratia gratum faciens*, is a supernatural quality permanent in the soul, which makes it pleasing in God's sight, and nothing but mortal sin can render it ineffectual. And thus He chooses that some should be sanctified, that they may be known as his devoted servants, and reverenced by the world accordingly, for the consolation

of the faithful, the conversion for sinners, for His own glory, and the confusion of heretics. He gives them supernatural graces, which He freely bestows, and with which He honours but a few. We have a thousand proofs that the divine goodness bestowed such gifts and graces on Rose from her earliest years. She was never sent to school, or taught by any one, but was so gifted by the holy spirit of wisdom, that she possessed great learning, and her intellect was highly cultivated. She preached publicly, exhorting all to obey the holy Church and the Pope, disputing with unbelievers and persecutors of the faith. She interpreted the most obscure passages in the Prophecies and Gospels with such wisdom and discernment, that those who heard her were struck with great wonder. She was frequently abstracted from her bodily senses, during which times things absent and invisible were seen clearly by her. She knew the most secret thoughts of men's hearts. Finally, she was honoured by frequent visitations from our Blessed Lord, as well as from the glorious Mother of God, and from the angels; and she performed many and strange miracles even during her childhood.

CHAPTER IX.

SHE CONFINES HERSELF TO A SMALL CHAMBER IN THE HOUSE.

A LIFE of solitude far removed from the bustle and movement of the world is the most suitable one for a soul desirous of union with God; in fact, it is better to be blind, deaf, and dumb to all outward objects, which serve but to distract the mind. The reason is, that seeing and hearing new things, and familiar converse even with friends and relations, cannot take place without danger, inasmuch as they draw the mind from heavenly things, and frequently idle thoughts and words will occur, which are very offensive in God's sight. The truth of these remarks was very evident to S. Rose; if she only went to the fountain, which was scarcely twenty steps distant from her father's house, the malice of wicked tongues was ready to invent a thousand malignant tales; and though so pure and innocent, she suffered much from these slanders. She had now attained her seventh year, and became sufficiently aware of good and evil to perceive the deceit and danger of the world in those unhappy days when Viterbo was reduced by all the cruel sufferings of war, pestilence, and famine, which deprived it of its inhabitants, and placed it a second time in the power of the perfidious Emperor. The Pope was now in

France; fear of Frederic's increasing power had obliged him to take this step, and Italy was nearly ruined by the emperor and his sacrilegious army. Although so many proofs of God's great love and favour were manifested to this blessed virgin, and although her whole trust was placed in the mercy of Jesus Christ, notwithstanding, nay, indeed, because of these great graces, her fondest wish was to enter into the monastery of S. Mary of the Roses, under the rule of S. Damian, and thus devote herself to a religious and contemplative life. However, the nuns refused to receive her, alleging as their reason her extreme youth and poverty, but it appears that the Lord of all had decreed otherwise for her. As a true follower of Christ, and in imitation of the bright example of the Holy Baptist, for whom she had such an increasing devotion, and whose life so much resembled her own, she determined to pass her days in retirement; for this purpose she chose, not a wild and solitary desert, as did Christ and S. John, because such an abode appeared unsuitable for a young and chaste virgin, but in her own little chamber she dwelt, and there found the solitude she so earnestly longed for, and this holy cell was so small and confined, that scarce was there room enough for her hard bed and little altar. Here she remained day and night, and only left it to attend mass at the nearest parish church of S. Mary on the Hill; and then she returned immediately to her voluntary prison, as she termed it, exercising herself in unceasing prayer, abstinence and discipline. Thus inflamed with Di-

vine Love, she renounced the world's attractions and dangers, with all its pomps and delights, and with an irrevocable will consecrated herself eternally to Christ, to serve Him in love, in patience, and in perpetual virginity.

CHAPTER X.

OF HER FASTINGS AND SEVERE MORTIFICATIONS.

Our holy Rose ever preserved her baptismal purity unsullied, nor does it appear that her life was ever stained by the slightest shade of sin; she always continued, under the protection of divine grace, an unwearied follower of her crucified Saviour, and of His holy servant S. John. No tongue is able to express the extent of her disciplines and abstinences; indeed, so excessive were they, that she became the wonder and veneration of her own times, as well as of posterity. When forced to lie down to take some rest, she would make herself a bed of boards, and place nothing between them and her body. She remained sometimes a whole week without touching food, and when she did take anything, it was so little, and of such trifling support, that divine love alone could have nourished her life. So surpassing was her love to Christ, and her desire to imitate His sufferings, that frequently her body was bleeding, from the severity of the disciplines she used, and often did

she fall to the ground from exhaustion. Her greatest torment and trial was when her parents endeavoured to persuade her to give up such severe penitence, and quit her little cell. It was a cause of marvel to all that so young and frail a child could endure such continual martyrdom. But Rose was especially elected and chosen by God to exalt the glory of His own Church, in times of such great need; and she wished but to do His will, and to render a sweet odour to her Creator, and fill the world with holy fragrance, to the confusion of unhappy sinners, who, sunk in luxury and sensual joys, were unwilling to suffer anything for love of Him who suffered such torments to save them from eternal damnation.

CHAPTER XI.

HER ILLNESS, AND VISIONS OF HEAVEN AND HELL.

The blessed Rose, being thus rendered illustrious in her childhood by the remarkable graces she received from God, Satan dared not approach one so pure and holy, so visibly protected by heaven, and guarded by angels. Still, his malice, which is ever vigilant, suggested that if God would send her some heavy trial, she would quickly murmur against his Providence, and thus, by impatience or distrust, give him power to exercise his temptations on her. But he was grievously deceived, for the virtues of the saintly child only

shone the brighter in times of affliction, and she only gained a higher degree of perfection. At the very time at which she was thus weakened by constant fasts and penances, God thought fit to visit her with a long and severe malady. But Rose, with unheard-of patience, was ever praising and blessing His holy Name, nor did she cease her frequent prayers, and other spiritual exercises, from which her dangerous illness might have released her. Her parents were deeply afflicted to see her thus suffering, and still so ready meekly to endure all for Christ's sake. Out of obedience to her father's and mother's wishes, she consented to change her bed for one more suitable to her weak state, but in spirit she was ever reclining on the hard bed of boards in her little cell. Her illness lasted more than a year, and she had just attained her ninth birthday, when her malady increased so rapidly, that she was deprived of sense and movement, and a deadly paleness overspread her countenance, insomuch that all around her thought that her spirit had already departed. But she was reserved for yet higher things, and it pleased God to grant her another proof of His glory, and to manifest to her the surpassing beauty of Paradise, and the torments of hell. She remained three days in a state of insensibility, during which time her soul was ravished in a divine ecstasy; after this, she opened her eyes, and immediately began to exhort her parents and those around her to repent of their sins, adding that during her trance God had shown to her the bliss of the good, and the misery of the wicked; she distinctly named

several individuals unknown to her, and who, in fact, died twenty years before her birth, and whom she had seen and known perfectly in her vision. This miraculous circumstance caused the greatest astonishment to those who were surrounding her at the time it occurred, as well as to all who heard of it.

CHAPTER XII.

HOW, DURING HER ILLNESS, SHE FELL INTO A TRANCE.

So faithfully did S. Rose correspond to divine grace, that at the early age of seventeen, she had not only perfected her own saintly character, but by her holy example and persevering advice, had converted many sinners from their evil ways. We have already seen how, prior to this illness, she had afflicted her body by constant disciplines and austerities, and how, during her severest sufferings, she never ceased entreating her parents and friends to despise the world, and to follow Christ; for she was not content to live the life of a saint, and save her own soul; but she ardently thirsted after the salvation of others. Her constant exhortations to win men's hearts to God were uttered with such singular fervour, eloquence, and persuasion, that all who heard her were moved to wonder and to tears. On Wednesday, the 22nd of June, 1249, she passed the whole day absorbed in spiritual communings, and until

the following night she took neither food nor drink, and, in fact, forgot to nourish her body, so sweetly was her soul fed by the celestial manna of divine grace. She then began to amend ; but the same night she became restless and exhausted, and again appeared to bo approaching her last agony ; but once more her senses were abstracted in a divine ecstasy ; for when asked by her mother whether she would take something, she appeared confused and as one awakened from a profound sleep; she answered that she would take some food, as the following day would be the vigil of her holy patron S. John, thus signifying that she should take no further nourishment until the feast. She then raised herself in her bed, as though nothing ailed her, and partook of what was brought to her all the while praising and glorifying Jesus Christ, the Blessed Virgin, S. Anne, and the whole company of saints in heaven, with the most wonderful joy and gladness. Shortly after this her soul became much oppressed and troubled, and she heaved deep sighs, then threw herself out of her bed ; and prostrate on the ground, with her lips embracing the earth, and her arms stretched out, she burst into a flood of tears, so that her eyes became like two living fountains. Her poor mother was beside herself to behold her in this state, and hastened to raise her from the ground ; then the holy maiden, leaning upon her, returned to her bed, saying, " Oh, my mother, I shall soon leave to you all the delights and enjoyments of this world." They plainly saw from these tears succeeding her state of ecstasy, and from the proofs

of holy joys she had previously shown, that her conversation and thoughts were no longer on earth with mortals, but in heaven amongst the blessed, and that she longingly desired to free herself from the odious chain which bound her to her earthly prison, to unite herself with Christ in Paradise. With such like changes from joy to sadness, did she pass the remainder of the night, sometimes in the blissful contemplation of high and holy subjects, sometimes in persuading sinners with tears to repent and amend their lives, and sometimes forming exalted conceptions of the glory of the world to come, to the edification of all who listened to her.

CHAPTER XIII.

IN SPIRIT SHE SEES THE CHRISTIAN ARMY IN SYRIA, AND PRAYS FOR IT.

The short life of S. Rose was one continued miracle; from the vigil of the feast of S. John the Baptist, whilst suffering from a serious and most dangerous illness, she continued to fast, and smite her breast, imploring God's mercy on the Church, on Italy, on her own loved city of Viterbo, and on all Christendom; she was then transported in spirit to Syria, where she saw the dangers of the Christian army, then in the Holy Land; she was aware of all their sufferings and necessities, as if she had been corporeally present, nor did she fail

to aid them by her earnest suppplications. This event occurred on the 23rd of June, 1249, on the Vigil of S. John's feast. Frederick was still a dangerous enemy to Italy and holy Church. Viterbo was once more in the hands of the Imperialists, and of heretics, who were enemies to the Pope and all ecclesiastical liberty ; and just at the time of the holy maid's vision, the saintly Louis IX., of France, was heading the Crusaders in the Holy Land, confronting the Infidels under the walls of Damietta, but with little hope of success. The blessed child, who was suffering so much from illness, and from the trials of her country and her faith, so wonderfully manifested to her by God Himself, suddenly said to those who were around her bed, "Let us pray devoutly to God, that he may give strength and valour to the king of France to conquer and disperse his infidel foes." This supplication was pronounced with such intense devotion, that torrents of tears fell from her eyes. At that moment Damietta fell into the power of the Crusaders ; and without bloodshed on the side of the Christian host, the Saracens were put to flight. How could a sick and weak child like Rose have known of this enterprise immediately, had not God chosen to reveal it to her ? the public anouncement of the victory did not reach Italy till nearly a month after its occurrence.

CHAPTER XIV.

HER ILLNESS INCREASES, THE BLESSED VIRGIN APPEARS TO HER.

Towards the evening of this memorable vigil of the Feast of S. John Baptist, S. Rose became much worse, and for this reason many young girls and women who were with her, determined to remain during the night, as they imagined her death to be approaching. But she, possessing the vivifying virtue of divine grace, suddenly raised herself in her bed, strong as in her days of health. As if from a distance she beheld approaching towards her a beautiful woman, in all the brightness and majesty of a Queen, radiant as the sun, and crowned with stars; she was followed by a train of lovely maidens. At the sight of so much beauty, majesty, and splendour, the eyes of Rose were fixed as by enchantment, for, from the eternal serenity of that countenance, she knew full well that it could be no other than the glorious Mother of God, the ever-blessed Virgin Mary, accompanied by a choir of holy virgins from Paradise. She said quickly to those around her, "Oh, indevout and careless women, how is it you do not rise from your seats to render homage and reverence to the Queen of heaven? Rise up all of you, and let us go and meet her with all possible devotion and humility."

Then she got up from her bed strong and well, as if she had never been ill, and followed by all the women and children, who were struck with wonderful amazement, she knelt down, exclaiming, "Behold the mother of my Lord Jesus! you cannot see the radiant brightness of her form; it is not permitted you to see her matchless splendour!" Then the immaculate Virgin Mary, with her pure mouth full of celestial grace, uttered these words, "O sweetest Rose, from whose tender root lilies also spring, to bloom together in the eternal garden of Paradise, behold, and see with the eyes of your understanding how beautifully I am arrayed; and as in your earliest childhood you followed my example, so now make yourself like unto me, and accompanied by a train of pious women and maidens, devoutly visit the Church of S. John Baptist, and of the poor confessor S. Francis. Then go to my Church on the hill, and there, during the solemnities of the mass, cause them to cut off your hair, and take from you your dress, and other ornaments; then you must put on a hair shirt, and be clothed in the habit of S. Francis; all this is to be done by the hands of Donna Sita. When these my commands are fulfilled, your nuptials will be celebrated with your Spouse Jesus. Render devout thanks to the Divine Majesty, then return to your house, in your new penitential dress; and in celestial converse, be very diligent in prayer and praise to God. Be constant in exhorting your neighbours to good works, and reprove fearlessly the transgressors of the holy faith, and should you on this account receive reproaches

and persecutions, or harsh words from your relations or friends, or from strangers; suffer all patiently, for thereby you shall gain great merit, and after the merit, the reward of life eternal. Those who listen to, and obey you, will receive great favours and graces from God, and will live eternally with Him in heaven; whereas, those who despise and scorn your advice, or continue obstinate in their evil doings, will receive severe punishments." Then the glorious Mother of God ceased speaking, and she vanished, and with her, all traces of that supernatural brightness which before had illuminated the dark night, leaving the blessed Rose beside herself with joy and heavenly consolation, for the gracious and marvellous things she had heard and seen. Her relations and friends were filled with great awe and trembling; she besought them to leave her alone, so that she might meditate on the glories she had witnessed. Any delay in the fulfilment of the commands she had received from the Mother of God was very painful to her; so, notwithstanding the earliness of the hour, she awoke her mother, and begged her to go directly and tell Donna Sita and all the women and children she knew, to come immediately to her. Her mother said she did not like to disturb her neighbours at this unsuitable hour; but the blessed Rose replied, "Any hour is suitable, seeing that after so severe and dangerous an illness, I am to leave my bed entirely cured, by the exceeding mercy of Jesus and Mary; and before I go to fulfil the commands imposed on me, it is necessary that I should prepare myself, by doing

some act of charity, to the honour and glory of God's Divine Majesty." "But I cannot leave you alone," said her mother, "if I go, who can remain with you?" "Go in the name of the Lord," said the saintly child, "for I am not alone, the Holy Spirit is my companion." Then Katherine went directly, without any further reply; and as soon as she had delivered her message, the women and girls followed her immediately, so great was their love and reverence for the holy child. On their arrival, Rose told them all that had occurred, and what the Blessed Virgin had ordered her to do. She then called her mother, for like an obedient daughter, she seemed unwilling to act without her permission, and said to her, "Mother, when we are in the Church, I wish Donna Sita to cut off my hair, and vest me in the habit of the order of S. Francis." "All shall be done as you desire," answered her mother, but Sita was alarmed, and said, "My daughter, indeed I am not worthy to fulfil this pious office." The saint told her that "the glorious Mother of God had so ordered it should be." Then did Sita meekly bend her head in token of humble assent. With this and other spiritual discourses, the night passed away. As far as we can discover, this Donna Sita was a religious in the monastery of S. Mary of the Roses; and being appointed to this pious work by our Blessed Lady herself, we may easily conclude that she led a holy life, and was pleasing in the sight of the Lord. In these times it was permitted to nuns to go abroad, and they were frequently addressed by the title of Donna.

CHAPTER XV.

HOW SHE RECEIVED HER HABIT BY A MIRACLE.

On the morning of the Feast of S. John the blessed Precursor of Christ, the holy virgin rose from her bed in perfect health, and free from every trace of her former indisposition. Katherine perceiving she was getting ready to go and receive the habit of S. Francis, said to her in great astonishment, "My child, it is of no use your going now, for we have not yet procured your dress." To which Rose quickly replied, "Go, dear mother, and look at the head of my bed, you will find it there." Katharine obeyed, and great was her surprise, and that of the other women, to see a brown habit hanging at the place which Rose had named. All knew that it was miraculously put there, as the upernatural appearance of our Lady had occurred that same night, so that there could have been neither time nor opportunity to have procured it. There was no cord attached to it, so the holy child, out of humility, begged her mother to go and take one from the stable, and which served to tie up the donkey they kept there, and so she did. Then in haste they fetched the most precious jewels and vestments that could be found in Viterbo, and thus adorned did the holy maiden proceed to the churches of S. John and S. Francis, with

modest looks, and downcast eyes, accompanied by her mother, Donna Sita, a goodly train of women and children, and a great concourse of people, moved to devotion by the strange things they heard and saw. The pomp and splendour of her costly dress and brilliant ornaments sufficed to excite the envy of others; but the rich dress of this humble servant of God served but to set off her humility and modesty to greater advantage, which was manifested by the tears of those who accompanied her, and who thus proved how greatly they were edified by her holy example.

Having visited these two Churches, she then proceeded to that of S. Mary on the Hill. There Donna Sita took off her splendid robes, and cut her hair, and girded her with the cord already mentioned. This habit seemed to adorn her with fresh rays of sanctity, and thus, barefoot, and holding a crucifix in her hand, she returned to her house, all the while praising the sweet names of Jesus and Mary, exhorting all to penance, and still followed by a concourse of people, whom she had inspired with great devotion. Inasmuch as she was not permitted to enter the monastery of S. Mary of the Roses, she desired, after having received the habit, to bind herself by vows of continual poverty, chastity, and obedience, and every other religious obligation. She then made her profession to observe the rule of S. Clare, as well as that of S. Francis. She never ceased her obedience and subjection to her parents, and persevered, as long as she lived, in her vows, her fasts, and her disciplines; and this when she

was but a child of ten years old. May all profit by her bright and memorable example!

CHAPTER XVI.

OF THE MANY PEOPLE WHO WENT TO SEE AND HEAR S. ROSE, AND HOW HER FATHER'S ANGER WAS THUS EXCITED.

How wonderful and stupendous is the wisdom which comes from God; it serves, not only to enlighten the intellect of the humble and ignorant but through their influence the minds of many others are illuminated. Our S. Rose, whose education had been so neglected, and whose poverty was so great, showed wonderful signs of wisdom and knowledge, and the fame of her sanctity and miracles spread rapidly in Viterbo, and over the whole of Italy. After the miraculous interposition of the Blessed Virgin in the case of the habit of S. Francis, she received a greater portion of divine grace, and consequently the devotion of the people towards her increased rapidly. The truth of her doctrine, and the sweetness of her words won all hearts, and disposed them not only to return to their obedience to the Church, and to the Pope, but to despise every worldly affection to serve Christ. Great was the dismay and terrror of the devil, to see the world thus subdued by a mere child, and that she was enabled to frustrate his malice, and destroy the advantage he had gained

by the false teaching and preaching of heretics. By God's mercy the wicked spirit had no power over this blessed maiden, so he determined to tempt her father, by suggesting the danger of allowing so many persons to frequent his house, and many other delusive insinuations. Thus, urged by the spirit of darkness, he began by complaining of his daughter, and threatened her severely, saying: "Rose, I will not have such a crowd of people in and around my house; if you do not conceal yourself from them, your hair shall be cut off again." To soften her father's anger, and suppress the boldness of the devil, the child humbly answered, "Father, to all you think fit to do, I will patiently submit, for the love of Jesus Christ our Lord, who Himself permitted the sacred hair of His beard to be plucked off. Her father was still more irritated, and said, "If you do not obey me, you shall resemble Him still more, for I will tie you up and scourge you." The child with the humility so natural to her, bowed submissively, but crying bitterly, she answered, "And I will willingly be bound and beaten in memory of Jesus, who did not disdain to be tied to a pillar, and scourged for my sins, and for the sins of the world. All that I do, dearest father, God Himself has commanded through the medium of His holy mother, and with the most earnest affection of my heart I entreat you not to prevent my obeying His divine commands. I can promise you, that if you do not now contradict me Christ, Himself and His holy angels will be with you. However, notwithstanding your orders, I shall be obliged to obey

God, nor must you, on this account, consider me disobedient." Confused at these wonderful words, with a torrent of tears, he replied, "My beloved child, I confess my fault; do all as you will, and may the blessing of God be with you." To this strange contrast of the Father's severity, and the child's humility, the grandmother and mother of S. Rose were witness, as well as her spiritual Father Pietro Capotosto, Rector of the Parish of S. Mary on the Hill, and also the good Sita, and many others. She then, holding a crucifix in her hand, fell on her knees, with her eyes cast down, and said, "You must all of you bless me in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, and follow me;" and so they did. The holy maiden then went and visited the Churches, inciting all to penance, and exhorting them to pray fervently to God for the necessities of holy Church, and of all Christendom; and she prayed with such intensity and devotion, that it seemed as if her soul must depart from her body, all the while striking her breast and clasping her crucifix in her arms.

CHAPTER XVII.

HER VISION OF CHRIST CRUCIFIED.

So pleasing to God was the purity of Rose, and so great were her patience and humility, that they brought down Christ Himself from heaven,

who appeared to her hanging on the cross. The holy maiden was sitting in her lonely cell, meditating on those words of the Blessed Virgin Mary, that "when all her commands were fulfilled, and she had received the habit of S. Francis, she should become the spouse of Christ." She, reputing herself utterly unworthy, thought that the glory of martyrdom could alone raise her to such an honour. Then, contemplating the passion of Jesus Christ with great devotion and affection, she longed to suffer those scourgings and that bitter death, so as to unite herself more perfectly with her beloved Spouse. So absorbed was she in her meditation, that Christ crucified appeared visibly to her, covered with blood, and in a mournful, miserable condition. She was agitated and surprised at this sudden and pitiful spectacle, and in beholding it her soul felt intense compassion; so acutely did she suffer from the sight of His wounds and agony, that she could only call loudly on the Blessed Virgin to come to her help, and then fell lifeless on the ground. On returning to her senses, she shed an abundance of tears, and began to tear her hair, and beat her breast with a stone; she cried out, "My Father, my Lord, tell me why Thou art thus cruelly scourged and beaten?" "To save poor sinners," answered Christ. "But who hung Thee on that hard cross?" asked the impassioned child. He replied, "Sin and man's fury."

Then was her whole frame inflamed with ardent love, and she heaved deep sighs, and seeing how

the Divine Majesty was outraged, and was even now receiving fresh wounds from every part of Christendom, she called out with a loud voice "Mercy, Lord, Mercy." Whilst she was thus contemplating Him with such ardent affection, and with tearful eyes, Christ disappeared; and a second time she fell on the ground half dead. Then did she tear her hair, and rend her innocent flesh, and so great was her agony that she could scarcely stand. She knew she was appointed to appease God's wrath in those times of suffering to the Church, and to all Christian people, for whom she would even have offered herself up as a sacrifice. She took her crucifix and went and prostrated herself before the Blessed Sacrament in the church of St. Mary-on-the-Hill, and with a pitiful voice implored God's mercy on sinners; and then she scourged herself anew, so that a third time she fell fainting on the ground. A gentleman entering the church at this moment, and seeing her in this condition, raised her from the ground, and took her to her home.

But, inebriated with the love of God, and an ardent desire for the salvation of souls, she went out again calling loudly in the streets, "Brethren and sisters, let us all do penance, let us appease the anger of God, for great chastisements are threatening us;" she so moved the people by her voice and her words, that men and women with tears in their eyes cried out "Mercy, Lord, Mercy," to the great mortification of the heretics who heard them. The blessed Rose then returned to her house, and for three days continued to afflict herself with severe penances; her mother was so

distressed to see her body thus reduced and bleeding from abstinence and disciplines, that she besought her to lie down and take some repose, for she seemed ready to die. Thus did this blessed virgin, from contemplating Christ crucified, suffer all the bitterness of His passion, which she had so ardently desired. In her austerities she shed her blood for Christ, and was thus a martyr in will and affection, though not by death. Her life was preserved by divine interposition alone, for her natural strength must have given way under such constant trials.

CHAPTER XVIII.

HER VISION OF CHRIST GLORIFIED.

Whoever attentively considers the life of S. Rose, and how she sacrificed herself for the love she bore to Christ, even should he have a heart of iron, must be softened into tenderness and admiration at an example so touching and so beautiful. Suffering and martyrdom are invariably followed by glory and heavenly consolation, and so it happened to S. Rose. She was one day, as usual, alone in her little cell, praying with her accustomed fervour, when Jesus Christ again appeared to her, no longer covered with wounds and suspended on the cross, but glorious and resplendent, to comfort and console her, and to signify that, according to the Blessed Virgin's promise, He

took her for His beloved spouse. Full of joy and gratitude, she called her mother, and begged she would bring her a bunch of herbs. Katharine took some mint out of a vase she had in her room, and carried it to her daughter, who placed it in her bosom, and kneeling down, she remained some time sweetly contemplating her holy Spouse Jesus. At last she humbly besought Him to bless her, and her small cell, with the corner of the house which was attached to the convent of St. Mary of the Roses, and which thus would remain united to that monastery. Her Blessed Spouse granted her request, and then disappeared, leaving her filled with inexpressible sweetness and joy. After this Rose called her mother, and restored to her the bunch of herbs, saying, "My mother, you must keep this very carefully, and it must be very precious to you, for Jesus Christ Himself blessed it when it was placed in my bosom, together with this corner of the house, which will one day belong to my monastery." She called it her monastery, for future time being present to her, she foresaw with a prophetic spirit, that after death her body would lie there, and that this corner of the house would belong to the convent, which was fulfilled in the year 1661, when the whole house, being united to the cloister of the monastery, commonly called S. Rose, this corner, including her cell, was entirely enclosed, as may be seen to this day. So vividly were the visions of Christ and of the Blessed Virgin impressed on the mind of this saintly child, and so inflamed was her mind with love and zeal, that

she could never rest, and night and day she would go about the town followed by multitudes of women and children, singing praises to Jesus and Mary, and the whole city was much edified.

CHAPTER XIX.

OF HER DISCIPLES, AND HOW SHE TAUGHT THEM.

S. Rose, in imitation of her patron, S. John Baptist, and of Jesus Christ, chose certain young girls as her disciples and spiritual children, and taught them with marvellous zeal to walk in the way of the Lord; their love and reverence for her was very great. Thus was a child of ten years old endowed with such exalted virtues, as to become a guide and a mother to many. Amongst other wise counsels, she gave them these words, which are especially remarkable. "Be ever modest, and talk but little, for in much talk there is always sin; love poverty, and take pleasure in doing good to your neighbour; be humble and patient, and let your eyes be directed to the ground; observe abstinence and sobriety both in eating and drinking; be ever obedient to your parents and elders; be liberal and kind to the poor, for whoever hates and despises them offends Christ; follow the true Catholic faith; let the passion of our Lord Jesus be ever uppermost in your thoughts; and forgive those who have offended you."

CHAPTER XX.

OF THE WISDOM CONTAINED IN HER DOCTRINE AND SERMONS.

During the time that Rose was shut up in the solitude of her cell, that she might not see nor be seen by any one, God had permitted her to be attacked by a long and grievous sickness, but He had restored her to health, by the mediation of the Blessed Virgin, when she appeared to her. Then He willed that she should go abroad, and preach repentance and the holy Faith to the people. Thus from a hermit did she become an apostle and a preacher. She knew that in her youth she was not elected to a life of contemplation only, but also that the Lord had appointed her to one of activity and exertion, that she might in these her tender years cultivate the vineyard of His holy Church, and not spare herself, but in heat and in cold be ever ready to protect and defend the Faith by evangelical discourses, against the insidious attacks of those wolves who were then assailing it with their heretical doctrines. The Blessed Rose, obedient to each sign and inspiration from heaven, unhesitatingly embraced the duties of an apostle for the love of Christ, who Himself gave her wisdom, science, and eloquence. To men, as being

stronger and steadier, has been given the charge of preaching God's holy word; but it pleased Him in this instance to show His might and His miracles, and to confound the enemies of the holy Faith through the instrumentality of the female sex, and that in the person of Rose, who was not even a woman of mature age, nor one who by her years or experience, could in any natural way have acquired prudence, science, or knowledge, but a simple child of ten years old, a true follower of her heavenly Master, and of her most loving patron, S. John Baptist. It was she who after macerating her tender body with severe abstinences and harsh penances, in a little room in her own house, without ever being sent to school or opening a book, was filled with wisdom and divine knowledge, and took upon herself the office of an apostle, and succeeded admirably, not only in the eyes of the world, but also in the sight of heaven, to God's glory, and the salvation of her neighbour.

Each day she went about Viterbo with a crucifix in her hand, preaching the apostolic Faith in the churches and in the public squares. She proved the truth of her words by texts of Scripture, to a numerous concourse of people, who hastened from all parts to listen to such wonderful words from an infant's mouth. She persuaded, entreated, and reproved them. She was as one endowed with wisdom, zeal, eloquence, and learning, who had been taught in the schools, and constantly accustomed to preach; while it appeared impossible that a girl so young could

possess talents, such as to arrest the attention of the world. In her sermons she frequently threatened them with chastisements from heaven, which would inevitably follow the wickedness in which they were plunged, and so deeply did she move the hearts of the people, that all were converted from their evil ways, and with tears of contrition cried out with a loud voice, "Long live the Pope and the holy Church," and with a thousand praises glorified the Lord Jesus Christ, who deigned to speak to them by the mouth of a child the words of truth, in order to destroy their enemies, to extinguish the heresy and schism then so prevalent, and to exalt the faith, effects which immediately followed upon her preaching; an infinite number of heretics, moved by her words, and by the miracles which she performed, and assisted by divine grace, were converted, and publicly confessed the true Catholic and Apostolic faith. On this account the holy child Rose, as the chosen spouse of Christ, was honoured by many people with singular marks of reverence and veneration; but far from her was every thought of vain glory, and withher wonted humility she declared herself the vilest and most unworthy creature in the world, and hence, after having preached, she would return and hide herself in her house in confusion, and fly from the ostentation and vain praises of the world, for she knew how all wished to show her honour and respect.

CHAPTER XXI.

WHILST PREACHING SHE WAS MIRACULOUSLY LIFTED UP, IN THE AIR.

WHOEVER has faith, says Jesus, shall have power given him, to enable him to remove mountains, and to do strange and wonderful deeds, because God shows Himself marvellous in His saints, for their honour and His own glory. Our St. Rose was armed with this mighty buckler, and fully were these promises made manifest in her. Once as she was preaching to the people in one of the squares in Viterbo, on the duty of obedience to the Catholic Church, which she proved by the Prophets and the Gospels to be the only true one, the concourse of persons assembled was as great as were the wonderful powers of the preacher; the holy child was standing on the ground, so that she could not be heard and seen by all; then did the Almighty power of God work a signal miracle, for the stone on which her feet rested was gradually raised up into the air, and remained firm, serving her as a pulpit as long as her sermon continued, and then descending, remained stationary as before; this circumstance occurred several times, to the confusion of the heretics who saw and had derided her, as well as to the unutterable surprise and consolation

of the faithful believers, who esteemed themselves happy and blessed if they could but touch her garments. This stupendous miracle is proved in the acts of her canonization, and not only there, but it is also commemorated in a very ancient painting in the monastery of S. Mary of the Roses.

CHAPTER XXII.

ST. ROSE DISPUTES WITH AND CONFOUNDS THE HERETICS.

For upwards of a year Rose continued to preach the word of God, and so devout had all the inhabitants of Viterbo become, and so faithful to the Supreme Head of the Church, that the heretical Imperialists found but few to listen to their deceitful arguments. Although they had lost their influence, and could no longer induce the people to join their diabolical sect, they still exerted themselves to the utmost to draw the populace from their devotion to St. Rose, and in their public discourses endeavoured to falsify her arguments, to the prejudice of Catholic truth. The holy virgin was aware how actively these ministers of Satan were endeavouring to sow discord and disseminate their hateful doctrines among her own faithful flock; and so, confiding in the Holy Spirit's help, she challenged the wisest amongst them to prove

their own impostures against her reasonings ; this they consented to do, but she answered them so wisely and discreetly, that she soon silenced and convinced them ; they would sometimes persevere in contradicting her, but were obliged at last to own themselves vanquished, to the great delight of those who listened to her, who plainly perceived the Holy Spirit to be speaking by her mouth ; then did they glorify the Omnipotent God, and praise the holy Faith with joyful hearts. Some of the heretics were so confused and enraged at finding themselves vanquished by a mere child, that they repeated their insidious attacks, but her angelic spirit shone all the brighter, and she never failed to expose their fallacious arguments, and thus exalt the holy apostolic Faith. She threatened them with eternal damnation, and so abashed and alarmed them, that they ceased openly to attack her, though still they did all in their power secretly to work her ruin.

CHAPTER XXIII.

SHE IS ACCUSED BEFORE THE JUDGE AS A SEDUCER OF THE PEOPLE.

Truth is easily discovered ; the more it is attacked, the brighter it becomes ; but for deceit and lying to gain strength, powerful aids and artificial means are required. Rose's teaching served

to enrich the understanding of faithful listeners, as well as miraculously to convince and turn many heretics from their evil ways. Many there were who still remained proud and obstinate; and although they had nought to answer to her arguments, yet they continued to load her with reproaches and threats. Our blessed Lord often disputed with the Scribes and Pharisees, and convicted them of being children of darkness; they knew not how to answer Him, nor what to say, so they called Him a Samaritan, a seducer of the people, and one possessed with a devil. Rose, who followed the steps of her Spouse, Jesus, fought nobly for the Faith, and also convicted the heretics of their error, but they calumniated her, and suggested to the people, that she was a fool and mad; then finding that all these accusations did not prevent the people's devotion to her, they accused her also before the Imperial Judge, as a seducer of the people. This calumny so far succeeded, as to cause the judge to forbid Rose teaching or preaching any more under very severe penalties.

Rose, who had patiently endured all their abuse and insults for the love of Christ, on hearing the unjust sentence of the tyrant, was inflamed with divine zeal, and armed with the helmet of our Faith, took her crucifix and answered boldly, that as long as she had life she would fearlessly continue to preach God's Word, and the Faith, in defence of which she was ready to shed her blood, and endure even death itself, thus exhorting the people by her words and example, to stand firm and protect their cause and Christ's

Church against their assailants. The holy virgin was seized and cruelly beaten; she suffered all these torments with gratitude, and praised God for counting her worthy to be afflicted for His sake.

CHAPTER XXIV.

HOW SHE WAS SENT OUT OF VITERBO BY ORDER OF THE JUDGE.

How distasteful is truth to the worthless and wicked! they like to live after their own wills, and hate being reproached for their misdeeds. But how many reproaches and injuries did Rose endure in defence of the truth of her holy religion when it was attacked by the heretics! They saw how the blessed child persevered in her spiritual exercises, fearless of the consequences; they therefore, like mad dogs, determined to attack her, and put her to death if possible; and their evil intentions would have succeeded, had she not been protected by the omnipotent hand of God. To such an extent had their fury increased, that they went themselves before the Judge to accuse her. They said to him, "My Lord President, this Rose, under the appearance of sanctity, has so excited the inhabitants of Viterbo, and has so turned their hearts to the Pope, that if she is not speedily put to death, the people will revolt against us, and will expel us all from the town, to the great disgrace of the Imperial name,

and of the Majesty of the Emperor Frederic. You who are so deeply interested in this business, do not neglect to listen to us; if you do, we here protest before you that we will no longer have our liberty endangered, and the imperial laws set at nought by the mad interference of a foolish child." Thus, State interest, which had already moved Pilate to consent to Christ's death, at the instance of the Jews, that he might not lose Cæsar's favour, also induced the Imperial judge of Viterbo, unjustly to condemn an innocent young child, to satisfy the rage of the heretics, and thus to retain a tyrannical dominion, and the friendship of the false emperor. She was then brought into their presence to receive the sentence of death, on the ground of being a seducer of the people, and guilty of high treason; and thus the desires of these rapacious wolves were satisfied; but the child's tender age, and still more the fear of raising a tumult amongst the people softened the tyrant's heart; so he did not order her death, but passed sentence that her parents and herself should be banished from the town and district, and sent into perpetual exile, under penalty of their lives, with the entire confiscation of their little property, so that they might perish by want in a distant land. All this occurred in the month of December, 1250, on a day when the whole country was covered with snow, in the depth of a most severe winter. John and Katharine, Rose's parents, in affliction and despair, went to the President to entreat his clemency, and on their knees besought

his pity, and that he would delay the order for their departure until the severity of the cold was passed, for if not, they must perish on the road. The heart of this inexorable tyrant was still more hardened by their entreaties, and like an immovable rock amidst an ocean of tears, which deluged the eyes of these afflicted creatures, he sharply replied, that he only urged their departure in this inclement season, in order that they might perish by the way. Then he sent them from his presence with insults and threats, and ordered that they should be immediately turned out of the town together with their daughter Rose, before the people could be informed of the matter; and this was done, to the bitter sorrow and extreme pain of Rose and her parents.

CHAPTER XXV.

HOW AFTER A FRIGHTFUL JOURNEY, THEY ARRIVE AT SORIANO.

Happy and blessed are they who endure affliction and persecution in defence of the truth, for thus they become rightful heirs of the kingdom of heaven. St. Rose tasted this bliss on earth, and is now enjoying it in all its fulness in Paradise, where she lives crowned with glory. She confessed and preached the Catholic faith; she was afflicted

and persecuted, and was an example of singular patience. The torments she endured after this fatal sentence of banishment was passed, were those of martyrdom, and their recital would melt a heart of stone. St. Rose and her unhappy parents were conducted outside the gates of Viterbo, by the judge's officers, when, to increase the horror of their situation, they were commanded to go into the mountains. The ground was one sheet of ice, and the snow fell every moment faster and faster; in the mountains the wind became sharper and colder, and blew with redoubled fury, and the further they advanced, the more did their difficulties increase, for the heavy fall of snow had so obliterated the paths that no track could be discovered. Rose and her poor parents, worn out with fatigue, and deprived of all human succour, having entirely lost their way, and blindly wandering from side to side, placed their feet on what they thought was firm ground, and sank into the deep snow; and when they escaped from this danger, it was but to meet with fresh and still greater perils. At length they determined to remain stationary as long as the darkness lasted, with the frozen ground for their bed, and the sharp cold air for their canopy. Almost the sole covering of Rose was her hair shirt; her head was exposed, and as usual she was barefoot. Her body was frozen with cold, and she was nearly insensible; her tender feet were torn by the rough stones, and frequently so stained the white snow with blood, that the might have been compared to a red rose blooming in the midst of winter. Every devout soul

who contemplates her condition, must pity her, for besides her own trials, the knowledge of her parents' sufferings added still more to her affliction. The wind, the hail, the snow, and all the trials and torments in the world appeared that night to have conspired together to try the poor maiden's patience and confidence in God. Her hopes were fixed on Jesus, the sole refuge of her soul, and she did not now doubt His help, so that in the midst of this frightful scene, she stood as happy and trustful as if she had been in a garden of roses. Every moment she praised and blessed God's divine Majesty, and meditated on the Sacred Passion of her Lord, and her holy example consoled her poor father and mother. She devoutly commended them to her most merciful God, who was present with her to give her strength and comfort by His divine grace; for has He not bid all who labour and are burdened, to come to Him, promising that He will refresh them? This long night at length passed away, and a bright morning succeeded, and showed them a beaten pathway, which they followed, and it led them to Soriano, a town situated in the Cimini Mountains, eight miles distance from Viterbo, where they arrived worn out with fatigue and exposure to the cold.

CHAPTER XXVI.

ST. ROSE CONVERTS SOME OF THE EMPEROR'S FOLLOWERS.

This town of Soriano contained many of Frederic's soldiers, and they, together with the inhabitants, hastened to see St. Rose, as soon as the news of her arrival had reached them. When they beheld her holy countenance, and heard her discourse, they were moved to great respect and veneration, and she was received with much applause. Her zeal for the Faith seemed to increase with her sufferings and persecutions; and she preached here with such persuasivenesss the glorious truths of the Catholic Faith, and her sermons were accompanied by so many miracles, that all the people of Soriano were converted, and many heretics also, and together with our blessed saint, they glorified God, and showed many proofs of true contrition, mortification, and penance.

CHAPTER XXVII.

AN ANGEL APPEARS TO, AND CONSOLES HER.

Trials are always sent to those who love God, to prove their patience, and to manifest His glory, and these trials are invariably followed by inesti-

mable blessings. We cannot have forgotten how grievously Rose had been tried, and still less how she was comforted, first, by the appearance of the glorious mother of God, and then by Jesus Christ Himself. Now that she was an exile, and banished from her native town, an angel was sent from heaven to comfort her, during the darkness of night. He bid her be of good courage, for that her devout intercessions for the prosperity of the holy Church, the exaltation of the true Faith, and the extirpation of heresy, had ascended to heaven, and were granted by God's Divine Majesty, and that her own painful fatigues and trials would shortly be rewarded by everlasting repose. Then did the angel announce to her that the Holy See would soon resume its accustomed power, and Rome possess her chief pastor; after exhorting her to persevere in her spiritual exercises, the angel vanished. This heavenly visit greatly comforted and consoled the holy virgin, and she fervently thanked and glorified God for His mercies to her.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

SHE GOES TO VITORCHIANO TO CONVERT THE PEOPLE, AND THERE DISPUTES WITH A MAGICIAN.

About four miles from Viterbo is situated the town of Vitorchiano, whose inhabitants had been long noted for their devotion to the Catholic faith;

but at this time they were being led astray by the deceits of an infamous woman, who, under the mask of religion, was exercising magical arts amongst them, and that with such success, that almost all the people were turned from the true path to follow her diabolical inventions. She openly taught the heresy introduced by the Emperor Frederic, and as openly denied the truth of Catholic doctrine. Rose, whose zeal and charity burned still brighter since her last angelic vision, would not tarry any longer in Soriano, so desirous was she to save this woman's soul, and to enlighten the poor deluded people who were listening to her. Accompanied by her father and mother, she went immediately to Vitorchiano, where, raising the sacred crucifix which she ever carried with her, she began to preach with such eloquence and truth, that an interest was instantly excited in the town, and all flocked to see and hear the child from whose mouth such wonderful words of wisdom proceeded. Many were convinced, but on the other hand, the insidious arguments of the magician were so plausible, that many were doubtful to which of the two preachers they should give credence. The devil furnished this follower of his with such subtle reasonings, that she was allowed to defy the Pope's authority, and deny the efficacy and privileges of the glorious Church of Christ, and she gained great applause from the heretics, and thus, for a time, was permitted to throw discredit on St. Rose's teaching; and she exerted herself to persuade her followers to turn the holy child

out of the town. Still the blessed maiden persevered in upholding the faith, and so confided in God's divine grace, that the Holy Spirit convinced many through her instrumentality, and she determined to remain where she was, and watch the growth of the heavenly seed she had sown. St. Rose entered into frequent controversies with the magician, and never failed in confuting, and sometimes convincing her; and the people applauded her, and encouraged and besought her to remain amongst them, to declare to them the truths of the holy Gospel.

CHAPTER XXIX.

ST. ROSE QUITS VITORCHIANO, PREACHES IN OTHER PLACES, THEN RETURNS TO VITERBO.

Human applause was as painful as ever to St. Rose, and she suffered great pain when she heard herself praised. To be scorned and despised was her great joy, and she desired no glory save in the cross of Jesus Christ, in which she found all her happiness, and all the honours she desired. The miracle which occurred after the fire at Vitorchiano, which we shall presently relate, augmented the people's devotion to her, and great was the concourse of strangers and peasants who came to give her money and gifts, in order to receive spiritual counsel, or to obtain some especial grace from God, through her intercession. These proofs

of regard and esteem alarmed her humble spirit, and she endeavoured to conceal herself in the remotest part of her dwelling; she would accept of nothing, and desired to depend on alms alone for her livelihood. Seeing that it was impossible to prevent the people's reverence and devotion, and finding them so zealous and confirmed in the Faith, she left the city, and great was the sorrow which accompanied her departure. She preached in several other places, for her heart was set on the entire extermination of heresy, and the conversion of all Italy to Christ's law. In the year 1251, which was the eleventh of her age, she returned to her native town, as the death of the Emperor Frederic had freed it from imperialists and heretics.

As he who has long lost some precious gem suffers great sorrow and anxiety, so does he experience extreme joy when it is found and restored to him. The people of Viterbo had long been deprived of the presence of Rose, the sweetest and most precious flower they could have possessed, and they suffered great sorrow for her loss, although they had been consoled by the fragrant odour of her sanctity, which had reached them from afar. But when she returned to bloom afresh in her native soil, and there produce the sweet flowers and fruits of holy deeds, all hailed her with joy and unusual demonstrations of affection and devotion. The humble child desired no reward here below, and, dreading one vain-glorious thought, took refuge immediately in her own poor cottage.

CHAPTER XXX.

POPE INNOCENT THE FOURTH ORDERS A JURIDICAL ENQUIRY TO BE MADE INTO ST. ROSE'S SANCTITY.

After the Emperor's death, Pope Innocent IV. returned to Rome, where he was much edified by the accounts he received of Rose's sanctity, of her wonderful miracles, and of the extraordinary results of her labours—how she had been enabled by the Omnipotent power of God to destroy heresy, she being at the time quite a child. After he had ascertained the truth of these reports, she was authorised by his Holiness to teach and preach freely, by the authority of the Holy See; so that by the miracles performed by one of the faithful, the Church should augment the glory of God, and gain fresh triumphs in those troublous and unsettled times. This power was granted to the blessed young virgin in the year 1252. The Bull was sent to the Prior of St. Mary's, of the Order of Preachers, and also to the Archpriest of San Sesto of Viterbo, and contained an order for them to write the Life of S. Rose, with an account of the miracles she wrought, and by juridical investigation to attest her sanctity; which was immediately done.

CHAPTER XXXI.

HOW AN ORATORY WAS RAISED UNDER THE NAME OF ST. ROSE, AND WHAT FOLLOWED.

Rose was now universally venerated as a saint, and had by her holy conversation attracted numerous faithful disciples and followers. Pietro Capotosto, Rector of the Church of St. Mary on the Hill, her spiritual father and confessor, was more capable than any other person of judging of her sanctity and purity. Inspired with a spirit of devotion towards the holy virgin, he opened an oratory in which the disciples of Rose might assemble, and there carry on their spiritual exercises. This he did during the lifetime of the saint, and when she was fifteen years of age, in a house near the same Church of St. Mary, and but little distant from the monastery. This oratory they called the Monastery of St. Rose, for the holy maiden was recognized to be a saint while living. Pope Alexander the Fourth had granted the privilege to the nuns of St. Mary of the Roses, that for the distance of a mile all round the monastery no religious house of any kind should be founded. The execution of this grant was entrusted to the Prior of St. Matthew of Viterbo. It appears, however, that he was unwilling to prevent the erection of this new oratory; but the enemy of man-

kind, from whose power our saint had rescued so many souls, sowed the seeds of envy amongst these nuns, and, once more, the public interest was urged; they said that it was defying the Pope's Bull to erect any oratory so near to their monastery, and much to their prejudice; and as they had refused to receive St. Rose into their congregation, so now they would not permit the erection of a convent under her name. They complained of it to the prior to whom the Pope had committed his orders, and as he did not attend to their complaints, they addressed Pope Alexander himself, who was at Anagni. To satisfy these nuns, his Holiness, in another Bull, repeated his order to the Bishop of Viterbo, and, consequently, the oratory of St. Rose was totally destroyed. The original Bull is preserved in the Archives of the Monastery of St. Mary, dated Anagni, June 26th, in the first year of the Pontificate of Alexander.

This Bull proves that S. Rose had in no way been the projector of this new oratory, but the said Pietro Capotosto alone. It also shews that the Pope recognized her as a saint by the following words:—"Petrus Capotosto Presbyter Viterbiensis in quadam Domo, quam infra prædictum spatium obtinet, et quam Monasterium Sanctæ Rosæ nominat, quasdam Mulieres Religiosas nititur congregare." Neither did his Holiness command the destruction of the oratory of St. Rose for any other reason than its proximity to the other monastery. All this happened by God's appointment and divine permission, clearly to demonstrate that the Monastery of St. Mary should lose all other titles,

and only perpetuate the name of S. Rose, which accordingly has not failed to occur.

CHAPTER XXXII.

ST. ROSE SHUTS HERSELF UP IN HER LITTLE CELL, WHERE SHE ENDS HER LIFE.

St. Rose held the world in such detestation through the great desire she had to be united to her heavenly Spouse, and to enjoy the delights of paradise in His presence, that every other thing was distasteful to her. The envy and malice of the devil was excited towards her, seeing her so virtuous and so holy, and by his wicked influence she was persecuted and despised. The nuns of St. Mary of the Roses would neither receive her nor permit a monastery to be built for her, so she meekly conformed her will to that of God and the Pope, and armed with patience, humility, and holy obedience, she shut herself up in the voluntary prison of the cell in which her childhood had been consumed. Here she dwelt in all Christian graces, in fasting, in prayer, and in every self-denial and torment, and so she persevered until the close of her innocent life. How beautiful is such a life in one so young! It is but a fresh proof that the love of Jesus Christ can teach even children to despise all things for His sake. Our young saint was quickly travelling along the narrow pathway that leads to heaven, and with rapture did she meet that moment which placed her in the immediate enjoyment of eternal felicity.

BOOK II.

BOOK II.

THE HISTORY CONTINUED, CONTAINING THE MIRACLES WROUGHT BY ST. ROSE WHILE LIVING; HER HOLY DEATH; THE MIRACULOUS TRANSLATION OF HER BODY; AND THE MIRACLES PERFORMED BY HER INTERCESSION AFTER HER DEATH.

CHAPTER I.

AT THREE YEARS OLD S. ROSE RAISES HER AUNT TO LIFE.

Pope Gregory the Ninth accused the Emperor before the Council of Lateran, as a persecutor of the Faith, and of the Apostolic See; Frederick, in order to disturb and delay these proceedings, imprisoned several cardinals who were on their way to attend the Council, which so distressed the Pope, that he soon died of grief and disgust. The few cardinals who were free lost no time in choosing another Pope, who was Celestine the Fourth; but he also died only seventeen days after his election. So that, in 1243, Italy was overrun by the Emperor's lawless army, the

Church was afflicted and oppressed, and there was a mournful vacancy of twenty months in the Holy See, and many of the cardinals continued in prison. The town of Viterbo, oppressed by the Emperor's tyrannical yoke, was under the authority of a certain count, whose name was Simon, one of the presidents, to whom Frederic gave entire power over the people, who, under his guidance, now threw off their submission to the Papal authority. The town was full of vice and sin ; Christian charity had departed ; faith was cast away, and devotion had ceased amongst the people ; whilst the nobles, all in favour of the excommunicated Emperor, joined in his rebellion against the Apostolic See, and began to encourage the prevailing heresy. The small number of clergy and laity, who continued their obedience to the Church, were so harassed by the imperialists, that it was with considerable danger they could assemble to raise their supplications to Jesus Christ. At this time Rose was only three years old, but a child of wonderful understanding, and angelic disposition ; enlightened by divine grace, and led by her parents in the way of holiness, even thus early, she manifested a surpassing knowledge of heavenly things. Her reverence towards the crucifix, the images of the holy Virgin, and St. John the Baptist was beautiful to behold ; and often the father and mother would take their little daughter and kneel with her before them, and then raise their voices in affectionate and fervent supplications to heaven, to mitigate the wrath of God in these miserable times of trial to the holy Faith,

and their beloved country. The blessed Rose, mindful of her parents' fervour, and inspired by Jesus Christ, joined her pure intentions to these pious prayers. So much did this simple child, elected for paradise, please our divine Saviour, that He soon testified His gracious approval of her. At this time Rose's maternal aunt fell ill and died; her body had lain an entire day in the coffin, and towards night she was to be buried. Rose, in the presence of her parents and other friends, approached the dead woman, and, touching the dismal bier, called her aunt with a loud voice. O miraculous power! at an infant's voice, through the potency of the Holy Spirit, death fled away dismayed, the dead woman opened her eyes, returned to health and strength, and lived for many years.

The account of this very rare miracle is to be read in the process containing the proofs of her sanctity; it is also illustrated by ancient paintings in her church, which time has now nearly effaced. Thus wonderfully did Christ choose to prove His power, and through the sanctity of a young child to exalt His Church, and confute heresy. We can well believe how rapidly the fame of this miracle spread through Viterbo, and so efficacious did it prove, that the people were moved to devotion, and rose up against the imperialists, glorifying God's greatness and the holy Faith. The Imperial President resisted these demonstrations, but the people lost no time in communicating with the Pope, Innocent the Fourth, who immediately came to their assistance. They raised the standard of

the Faith, openly declared themselves against the President, and, well-armed, went to his palace, which they pillaged, and compelled him to escape with his followers to that part of the town where the cathedral now stands, and thus he saved himself from the fury of the populace. Here he awaited the Emperor, who immediately came to his assistance with all his army. The people of Viterbo expected his arrival with courage and fearlessness; for, since the miracle wrought by St. Rose, they placed all their trust in God's mercy and goodness, and not in their own strength, secure that heaven would protect them from their foes, however formidable they might be, through the interposition of the holy young maiden whom Christ Himself had elected. The Emperor was forced to retire with great loss, and quit Viterbo, together with Count Simon, who was restored to liberty, as well as the rest of the imperialists who had been detained in the castle. Thus wonderfully delivered from so many dangers, the town returned to its obedience to holy Church.

CHAPTER II.

HOW WHEN S. ROSE WAS CARRYING BREAD TO THE POOR, IT WAS MIRACULOUSLY TURNED INTO ROSES.

THE poor man's ground is so productive, that whosoever sows seed in it, will reap an abundant harvest. This bank gives such good interest, that he who entrusts to it his capital, will find abundant gain. In short, charity is a most yielding seed; it produces divine sustenance, for whosoever feeds the poor, feeds Christ. From her tenderest years Rose sowed her seed in the poor man's field, nor was she ever weary of cultivating it, and she ever found divine grace so propitious to her, that she gathered, as we already know, fruits of eternal blessedness and sanctity. She never turned away from a poor man's voice, but would always hasten to succour him in his distress; if hungry, to feed him, if naked, to cover him. She would sooner have passed a day without eating or drinking, than without bestowing an alms on him who required it. If she had no money to give, she would console them with affectionate words; whatever she gave was multiplied in God's sight into a great treasure, for it came from a pure heart, from an innocent hand, and from a fervent desire of serving Christ in the

person of His poor; she seemed like one appointed to dispense heaven's charities.

Rose's father at length began to complain of her perpetual alms-deeds, especially as he was frequently suffering from extreme want. The blessed child being inspired by the Holy Ghost, could be at no loss to satisfy her father's scruples; but at length he sharply rebuked her, and prohibited her giving anything more away; she promised to obey; so not to excite him to anger, she deprived herself of a part of her own food for her beloved poor; and she did all she could to conceal the pious stratagem. One day God wrought a wonderful miracle to convince her father of his fault, and to prove how acceptable was his daughter's charity. The young child was occupied in some holy meditation, when she heard the noise of some poor people who were begging in the street; she ran directly to fetch some pieces of bread she had reserved, and went to give them to the poor people, hiding them in her little apron. God permitted her, for His own glory, to meet her father at the door; he perceived that she was carrying some bread to the poor below, so in an angry tone he desired her to open her apron, and show him what she had in it. The child being struck with terror and filial reverence, immediately obeyed, and unfolding her apron, behold! in the place of bread, her lap was filled with the choicest and sweetest roses. O miracle worthy of Jesus Christ! Her father was surprised and confused; he clearly saw that He who could turn

bread into roses, could also provide for the necessity of himself and his family, even though they bestowed food and raiment on those who were in need. Thus he no longer dared to enforce the obedience of his child; but now he glorified God for this fresh and wondrous proof of his grace. So Rose continued all her spiritual exercises, and her deeds of charity, with no further contradiction from her father.

CHAPTER III.

HOW A BIRD WAS STOLEN FROM ROSE'S MOTHER, AND THE MIRACLES ATTENDING ITS RECOVERY.

Shortly after the occurrence of the miracle just recounted, Katharine, the mother of our saint, had a favourite starling stolen from her by one of her neighbours. As is so often the case, especially amongst women, she valued this bird now that it had been stolen, more than anything she possessed, so she left no peace to any one until her lost favourite was restored, and, in fact, she was quite miserable about it. The young Rose was distressed to see one so dear to her in this unsuitable state of agitation, and as it had been revealed to her who had taken the bird, she took the guilty person aside, and with gentle kindness implored she would return it to her mother. The woman, both angry and ashamed, with a loud

voice and injurious words, denied having taken it. She had scarcely given utterance to the denial, when feathers of the same colour as the stolen bird appeared miraculously on the left side of her face. The wretched woman, finding her theft thus detected, ran to fetch the bird; mortified and confused, and on her knees, she restored it to our saint, confessing her fault, and imploring forgiveness from God and S. Rose, and promising to amend her life, which it appears had been very disorderly, as she had been in the constant habit of stealing, and then concealing her thefts by lies. Rose was moved to compassion at the sight of her distress; she raised her supplications to heaven, when the feathers which so disfigured the woman's face, disappeared as miraculously as they came.

CHAPTER IV.

THE MIRACULOUS MENDING OF A BROKEN JUG.

Our Lord Jesus Christ frequently permits His saints and servants to be calumniated, and to appear guilty to the world, so that their innocence and sanctity may be still more publicly testified, and shine with increased lustre to His own glory. Rose was just seven years old, when, in obedience to her mother's order, she went to the fountain of S. Mary on the Hill, to draw water in an earthen jug; it was but a short distance from the house,

and several other children were assembled for the same purpose. Rose was only intent on fulfilling her mother's order, so the moment she had filled her jug, she was returning home. But one of the other children, careless and thoughtless, stumbling, fell down, and broke her jug into a thousand pieces. At this accident, the child filled the air with her screams, for she dreaded her mother's anger, whom she saw coming towards her; she excused herself, and said it was all Rose's fault, who was quite innocent of the offence. The woman believed the false accusation of her own child turned angrily towards Rose, and began to abuse and beat her, and complained of her to her mother, who had come up on hearing the noise. The innocent child, who knew not how to act wrong, began to justify herself, and excuse her companion; but she could not soften the angry woman, so, without giving any further reply to such unjust accusations, like a true follower of Christ, she quietly listened while she was abused and insulted; she then stooped down and picked up the pieces of the broken jug, and putting them together as well as she could, she devoutly raised her eyes to heaven with firm faith, when in her pure holy hands, by virtue of Divine power, the broken jug was totally restored, as if it had never been injured. Then she returned it to the noisy woman, who had so calumniated her by injurious words; she went along mortified and confused, while those who had witnessed the scene, together with the holy virgin Rose, glorified God's mercy and omnipotence.

CHAPTER V.

HOW S. ROSE, WHILST PREACHING, WAS STRUCK BY A HERETIC, AND HOW HER PROPHECY CONCERNING HIM WAS FULFILLED.

If a man lives in the fear of the Lord, he is generally laughed at and despised by men of perverse and dissolute lives, according to the words of Solomon.

S. Rose made a similar prophecy, and its fulfilment soon came to pass. The blessed maiden gained many souls to Christ by her sermons, and the sect of heretics which had arisen in Viterbo was very much diminished. Still those who did remain detested our Saint, and scorned her preaching, and insulted her in a thousand ways. However, these trials served but to increase her holiness. She was one day explaining the Scriptures to a large concourse of persons assembled on the square at Viterbo, when one of the Imperialists, more depraved than the rest, and who had been laughing at her, and ridiculing her words, pretended not to distinguish her amongst the crowd, and passing close to her, struck her a violent blow on the arm. Rose turned round, and addressing him, said, "Before three days are passed, thy body will be so disfigured, that every man's finger will be pointed at thee." And so it was, for to fulfil the prophecies of Esaias and

S. Rose, God caused this man's skin to peel off from his head to his feet, so that he was abhorred and avoided by all.

CHAPTER VI.

AMONGST OTHER MIRACLES SHE RESTORES A BLIND MAN TO SIGHT.

It pleases God to work miracles not only Himself, but also by means of apostles, prophets, and other saints, for three principal reasons; first, to enlighten the incredulity of men with proofs of the truth, and to confirm the faith preached by His saints; secondly, to restrain and confound the temerity of tyrants, and of those who are enemies to His laws; and thirdly, to manifest to His people, by miracles, the glory and power of the Creator. The period in which S. Rose lived found the Church sadly persecuted, and Viterbo was especially the seat of heresy. On one of the public squares the people used to assemble, and the heretics were in the habit of preaching against Rome and her ecclesiastics. These had been excommunicated by the Pope, with all their followers; still did Frederic, with his temporal power, hope to eradicate the religion established by Christ, and sealed with His most precious blood, and which was animated by the Holy Spirit.

So the Almighty Father thought fit to send S. Rose into the world at this time, to teach and preach during her childhood, and confess that holy faith which heretics were persecuting and denying. But since her words failed to convince and soften the obstinate hearts of these impious heretics, and to bring them to Christ, God vouchsafed another miracle to prove the truth of the young child's doctrine. Each time that she preached or went into the street, she performed many mighty works, so that multitudes of people resorted to her, to receive some of the graces heaven had entrusted to her to impart. One day a poor old man, named Andrew, was walking before her; he had been totally blind for many years, and had given up all hopes of recovering his sight by natural means; he had recourse to this holy maiden, and prayed devoutly that she would intercede with God for him. She felt great pity and love for this poor afflicted creature, thus deprived of his most precious gift, and fervently did she entreat her heavenly Father for this His servant, then having signed the blind man with the cross, his sight was instantly restored, and he returned fervent thanks to God and His saint.

CHAPTER VII.

HOW SHE FORETELLS THE DEATH OF THE EMPEROR FREDERIC.

God at times permits His holy Church to be tossed about, like a ship, in the dangerous sea of persecution, and His faithful servants to appear abandoned and afflicted by many trials. In some measure He seems to have forgotten them. This happens only to make them fly to Him, and cry aloud to Him for mercy, so that His Church should not suffer shipwreck; and He will come to their aid, and help them in their danger, and destroy His and their enemies, even by the mouths of infants and children. Until the year 1244, Pope Innocent IV. remained in France, whither he had gone to escape the sacrilegious power of Frederic, who was forcibly in possession of the states of the Church. In the year 1250, the Apostolic See was still deprived of her chief pastor, and Italy had become a receptacle for crime and heresy. S. Rose was then occupied in preaching the faith, and then, when only ten years old, was exiled from her native town, and banished as a seducer of the people. In fine, the vessel of Holy Church was floating on the waves of fiery persecution, and was agitated by such fearful storms, that she appeared ready to be sub-

merged in their fury. Then did S. Rose, together with her faithful followers, gather fresh courage, and still more earnest prayers ascended to heaven, for protection against this frightful tempest. Prayer and penance had their accustomed success, and awakened God's mercy. S. Rose brought the inhabitants of Soriano to repentance for their crimes, and whilst she was preaching to them on the fifth day of December, 1250, the vigil of S. Nicolas, she prophesied the emperor's death, saying aloud, "Listen to me joyfully, O faithful followers of Jesus Christ, you who have confided in His omnipotence listen and rejoice ; good news do I bring you, which will bring great joy and comfort to all Christendom. It pleases the Lord to remove from the world the Church's great enemy, and the cruel persecutor of Catholic faith. Before three days are passed you will receive tidings of the death of the emperor Frederic ; now will the Church's triumph come, and her liberty return with her enemy's fall. Let us all rejoice and be glad, let us render thanks to God's clemency, who deigns to send consolation to His people, after so many years of trial and misery."

Frederic expired at Fiorenzuola di Puglia, on the 13th of December, or a little before, some say of malignant fever, while others pretend that he was poisoned ; his death is also attributed to his son Manfredo, who desirous of his father's throne, is said to have suffocated him with a pillow. Whatever might have been the cause of his death, at all events it followed the announcement made by

S. Rose. At this joyful intelligence, the people of Viterbo raised aloft the Church's standard, and in a body attacked the president and all the imperial troops, and expelled them from the town. The other towns in Italy followed this example, and rivalled each other to defend the Holy See, and the Supreme Pontiff. His Holiness hearing the account of Frederic's death, left France to console Italy by his holy presence.

CHAPTER VIII.

S. ROSE RESTORES A BLIND WOMAN'S SIGHT.

God permits the holy faith at times to be attacked, in order that its truth should be more clearly demonstrated. He permitted S. Rose to meet the magician in Vitorchiano, so that the truth preached by her should be still more evident, and thus the faithful be consoled, and the incredulous convinced. Although S. Rose was so successful, still many were seduced by this perfidious woman's arguments. Then did Rose raise her innocent eyes to heaven, and beseech God's mercy on this obstinate hardened woman, so that nothing might prevent the entire acknowledgment of the truth of the holy faith, and that they might all unite in praising and glorifying God in holy mother Church.

Thus having implored Divine grace, she began

to work wondrous miracles in this town of Vitorchiano, amidst the people's acclamations ; of one especially we must make mention. There lived here a young girl named Delicata, who being born blind, had ever continued to be deprived of the blessing of sight, nor had she the slightest hope of ever recovering it. Her parents had renounced heresy, and had embraced the Catholic faith at the persuasion of the blessed Rose ; they brought their child to her, devoutly beseeching that she would intercede for her to God, to whom nothing was impossible. Rose's heart was touched at their distress and immediately prayed fervently; she then touched Delicata's eyes, making the sign of the cross ; they opened directly, and God miraculously restored their sight, and the child enjoyed the blessing thus wonderfully bestowed on her as long as she lived. The fact of such a miracle, accompanied as it was with many others, wrought such a wonderful conversion amongst the people, that men and women caught the flame of devotion, and became devout followers and upholders of holy Church. The magician alone remained obdurate amidst this penitential crowd, and aided by the spirit of darkness, she still endeavoured to disseminate her sacrilegious incantations amongst the devout followers of the blessed saint.

CHAPTER IX.

S. ROSE ENTERS THE BURNING FLAMES AND ESCAPES UNHURT.

The more S. Rose, the apostle of Christ, preached the faith, and confirmed the people of Vitorchiano in their deference to the Pope, so much the more did this woman, by the devil's aid, try to seduce them to follow her evil suggestions. However, notwithstanding the proofs of S. Rose's sanctity, and the frequent controversies she held with this woman, nothing could move the perfidious heart of this instrument of Satan. Still the saint knew that the mercy of God was abundant, and that He was ever ready to stretch out His arm to save the soul Christ had purchased with His sacred blood, so at last she subdued the heart of this woman, by a still more supernatural and miraculous sign than she yet had witnessed. First, Rose proposed to fast for twenty days, to prove the truth of her faith, without tasting any food, confiding in Christ's power to surmount nature, and preserve her in health and strength. But the perfidious woman, intent on deceiving the people, and lessening the grandeur of the miracles which God chose to work, in justification of His immaculate law, in the person of His servant Rose, answered that there would be nothing superna-

tural in the proposed fast, for that wolves and cranes frequently taste no food for a whole month, and still live on. The holy child, discovering the excess of this female's malice, without conversing any more with her, inspired by God, desired those who surrounded her to light a large fire in the middle of the square, where they were assembled, and to call all the town together, by sound of a large church bell, so that to all the true faith should be revealed, and they should decide whether they should follow that preached by her, or the suggestions of the heretic. Her orders were instantly complied with, and they set fire to a large heap of wood. The holy young virgin prostrated herself before God, and raised her eyes devoutly to heaven, saying: "O Lord Jesus Christ, only refuge of my soul, without knowledge or merit I have done all that I could, and all that Thy divine grace has suggested to me, in order to induce this people and this obstinate woman to be converted to the faith of Thy holy Catholic Church. Thou who beholdest the holy dispositions of the people, and the perfidy of this woman, grant me sufficient force and strength, that by virtue of Thy omnipotence I may resist the ardour of these flames, to confirm the one, and convert the other. Grant, O sweet Jesus, oh grant the fervent prayers that from my inmost heart, I, Thy vile unworthy creature, venture to offer to Thee, and be Thou moved to pity, so that all should know and proclaim Thee the true God, and the true Spouse of Holy Church." Having prayed thus, intrepid and joyful, with unwavering

faith she entered this fiery mount, turning herself about, first to the one side and then to the other, as freely and gaily as if she had been surrounded by bright and lovely flowers. Here she remained until all the wood was reduced to cinders, and then she descended not only alive, but the fire had not touched her clothes or injured her in any way, to the indescribable astonishment of the beholders; who, prostrate on the ground, with abundant tears, implored God's mercy, and praised and lauded His Supreme Majesty and greatness.

The magician at this astounding spectacle was stupified and filled with terror, and stood speechless and motionless; seeing which, the blessed virgin Rose, with humble and gentle words, said: "My dear sister in the Lord, banish incredulity from your heart, and confess the faith of holy mother church, which is the true faith of Christ, who, through His mercy and benignity, has saved me in these ardent flames, and is waiting to receive you also in the bowels of His mercy.' Then the poor woman fell on her knees, and with abundant tears confessed the truth, and, repenting of her sins and errors, besought God's pardon, and rendered humble thanks to the saint, whose powerful mediation had gained her conversion. Thus did God reward Rose's confidence in Him, Christ protected her, and angels guarded her; the flames had no power to hurt her, and great and mighty were the miracles she performed at Vitorchiano; she restored sight to the blind, and brought the perverse obstinate magician, who was already the devil's prey, to penance and love of Christ, and

restored every inhabitant in the town to obedience to the Church.

CHAPTER X.

S. ROSE'S PROPHECY ON BEING DENIED ENTRANCE INTO S. MARY'S MONASTERY.

S. ROSE's sanctity advanced with her years, her piety increased, as well as the devotion of the people towards her, especially since the Pope had commissioned her life to be written, with a full account of the miracles she performed, and bade her preach God's word with the authority of the the Apostolic See. She, then, who coveted the names of fool and sinner, and dreaded being thought a saint, and avoided the world's praises, now determined to retire into the solitude of a convent life. Having always felt a great affection for the nuns of St. Mary of the Roses, she asked her father and mother's permission one day, and went to this monastery, and earnestly begged the superior to receive her into their chaste society; so that here sequestered from the world, she could end her days, and unite herself to her beloved spouse Jesus. There were a great many nuns at this time in this monastery, and it was particularly protected by Pope Innocent the Fourth, who had granted it many privileges. Reputing themselves most fortunate on these accounts, they laughed at Rose, a poor-looking child with scarce

sufficient clothes to cover her. So esteeming her very little, and thinking very much of the convent's interests, when they were asked to receive her amongst them, they excused themselves, pretending that their number was complete, and that as she had no dowry it was not possible she should enter their society. Although her miracles had been so public, and her preaching attended with such results, and although she was endowed with so many heavenly gifts, still God permitted the minds of these nuns to be so darkened, that they should persevere in their refusal to receive her. On this occasion St. Rose manifested, by the power of the Spirit, two great proofs of sanctity; she penetrated into the hearts of these nuns, and, discovering their intentions, she prophesied what would happen after her death, saying: "I know full well, my sisters, that the reason you will not permit me to join your society is not because your number is complete, but because you despise in me that which God delights to see in His servants, for He desires they should be poor in temporal goods, and only rich in spiritual possessions. He wills that the wisest should for the love of Him become fools, the wisdom of this world being folly in God's sight. But I now declare unto you that, this same poor, despised, and foolish girl you now reject, and refuse to receive whilst living, when dead will come to you, and then you will all hail her arrival with joy and gratitude, and she will be very precious to you." Having spoken thus the saint left them, and the nuns were filled with wonder and confusion.

CHAPTER XI.

S. ROSE'S DEATH AND BURIAL.

From the moment of S. Rose's birth until her death, she never experienced joy or repose, but every description of tribulation and fatigue. She effected as much during her childhood, as other saints have done in their mature years. She knew she should find no rest in this unquiet world, and confided in Divine mercy for a bright reward in eternity for all she suffered here below. She feared not death, but awaited it with joy, and frequently desired martyrdom, wishing with S. Paul, to loosen the bands of this mortal life, to enjoy the delights of Paradise with her glorious Spouse Jesus.

For two years prior to her death did this holy virgin voluntarily shut herself up in her cell, mortifying her flesh, in order to purify the spirit. At length it pleased the Lord to put an end to her sorrows, and to open to her view the glories of eternal bliss. Finding herself reduced to a state of great debility, from her constant fasts and continual mortifications, and already hearing the voices of the celestial messengers, who were calling her to Paradise, she left many records and useful counsels to her parents and disciples, and to other persons who were in the habit of attending

her; then with great devotion did she ask for and receive the last sacraments of the Church; she then praised God, and the glorious Virgin, and S. John Baptist, S. Francis, and other glorified spirits; she embraced the crucifix, and then by the hands of angels, who appeared to her in great companies, she was presented to the glorious presence of Jesus Christ, so that adorned by the immensity of His glory, she should ever live amongst pure and chaste virgins in the celestial choir. She died, or rather she was born to live for ever, in the year 1258, on the 6th of March, in the seventeenth year of her age. Her body remained in the cell where she expired, and so beautiful did it appear, that she seemed to sleep. Her countenance was so fresh and bright, that it made her look like a blooming rose, and the fragrant odour which proceeded from her body, made the resemblance still more striking. It is said that when she died, the parish church bells rang, as on a festive day, by no human aid. From this occurrence, and from the universal belief in her sanctity, all the people of Viterbo hastened to the saint's house, and with extraordinary signs of devotion desired to see her. They had feared that, on hearing of her demise, the people, from their extreme reverence, would come in crowds to procure some relic from the body of the departed saint, and perchance have injured the sacred remains, so they tried to conceal the moment of her death, and with the greatest possible secresy she was carried to the neighbouring church of Saint Mary on the Hill, which was in her own

parish, crowned with roses and other flowers, which, notwithstanding the inclemency of the season, were found in abundance, as had also happened at her birth. Here she was buried on the left side of the entrance, nearly underneath the holy water stoup, in a grave dug on purpose, and then re-covered with the same earth. Humble and poor was this blessed virgin in her life, and the same humility and poverty accompanied her at her death, and God chose she should be buried meanly and poorly, to exalt her humility afterwards on earth, as it was already glorified in heaven.

CHAPTER XII.

S. ROSE APPEARS TO POPE ALEXANDER THE FOURTH AFTER HER DEATH.

Although from a good and holy life we may hope for a blessed and peaceful death, still to judge a soul in this world is a difficult thing, for holiness consists not in signs nor in miracles, nor does it entirely depend on good works, but rather on perseverance granted by Divine grace, which, crowning the work of salvation, unites grace with glory. Hence we esteem those blessed who prepare for the moment of death, and are pleasing to the Lord, so that in the day of salvation they may be favourably heard and helped. Their good works follow them, and they enjoy the blessing of

mercy, and dying in the grace of the Divine Majesty, they enter into the everlasting bliss of heaven, and the fame of their sanctity is perpetual in the world. As we have seen, S. Rose from her birth to her death, was exemplary in good works, and an example of sanctity. She was always preparing for her death, and in her case it was easy to know that she was numbered amongst the just, and an elect servant of Jesus Christ. She was buried in the Church of S. Mary on the Hill, as she herself had foretold, and her body had already lain there for eighteen months, and nothing more had been known of her; those of little faith began to doubt; but God, through her, intended to confound the heretics, and those who believed not, to console and encourage the faithful, and to manifest her sanctity for His own glory; to bring to pass the prophecy she had made, He chose Himself to canonize her and declare her sanctity.

It happened, then, in the 18th month after our saint's death, about the end of August, 1259, when Pope Alexander the Fourth was at Viterbo, that at break of day, whilst deeply absorbed in holy meditations, he was surprised by a feeling of unusual heaviness and slumber; the pure soul of the blessed Rose appeared to him, all joyful and bright, and with gentle words she said to him, "It has pleased my Lord Jesus Christ graciously to receive me into Paradise, and number me, by His divine mercy, amongst His other devout servants in the choir of elect virgins. You who hold, as His vicar, supreme power on earth, must go to the church of S. Mary in this town, where my

body is buried, and removing it from thence, you must transfer it to the monastery of S. Mary of the Roses, for there it must repose until it please the Lord in the last judgment day to unite it to this soul in heaven ; I am that Rose of Viterbo, servant of Jesus and Mary. Do not fail to fulfil in person all I have now signified to you, for I will be moved by no other hands ; these are the commands of the supreme God." When the Holy Pontiff awoke from this extraordinary vision, he at first esteemed it imaginary ; but three days later, she again appeared, and still more urgently repeated the same words to him. The mind of the Pope at this second vision was troubled with a thousand thoughts, for he knew well how holy this young virgin had been esteemed during her life ; he consulted several of his cardinals in this difficulty, being desirous to have their opinion on the subject. They being inspired by God, unanimously agreed to make this important occurrence a particular subject of prayer, and then await further light so as they might clearly know how to act. On the third night in the month of September, eight days after S. Rose's first vision, she again appeared, whilst the Pontiff was keeping vigil ; she complained of his deferring God's commands in the translation of her body. She told him still more distinctly, exactly where he should go to remove her corpse, which was placed on level ground and covered with earth ; she added that the Pope would find it where a rose was blooming ; and then the glorious vision vanished.

CHAPTER XIII.

OF THE TRANSLATION OF S. ROSE'S BODY, AND THE DECLARATION OF HER SANCTITY.

This third vision took place on the 4th day of September, 1250; and now Pope Alexander hastened to fulfil S. Rose's commands. He ordered the cardinals and clergy to be assembled, and went to the church of S. Mary on the Hill. At the entrance, exactly on the spot where her body reposed, they saw a beautiful red rose already in flower; for on this day, to the amazement of those around, God had changed the fruitful autumn into the flowery season of spring. After rendering the customary devout thanks to the supreme God, the Pope, holding the spade, began with his own hands to dig away the earth, so as to find the promised treasure. According to God's will, her body was not laid in a stone coffin, as was the general custom, nor in any shrine where, naturally, it might remain uncorrupted; but it was buried under ground in a grave dug in the pavement, and recovered with the same damp earth, where, for eighteen months holy water had been constantly dripping; so that all expected to see the body devoured by worms, and reduced to powder. But the great God, subduing nature and human fragility, willed that this holy body should be preserved in the earth as fresh and fair as when it

was placed there, and that on it a rose should bud in the autumn season, inside a church deprived of air and sun, and in a place trampled on by constant footsteps.

The Pope having found and uncovered the body, beheld it entire, spotless, and uncorrupt, without the slightest stain, and so beautiful as to resemble a living sleeping form, with no trace of death. The holy Pontiff and all the witnesses were amazed at the wonderful and supernatural spectacle, and the people were loud in praising God for His mercy, and the blessed Rose for her miraculous holiness, by whom at this time God wrought infinite wonders, by means of a certain odoriferous and marvellous manna, which was discovered underneath the body, with which they anointed the lame, the blind, the deaf, and the sick, and they were instantly healed. His Holiness then caused the body to be lifted up and placed on a costly bier, by four cardinals, accompanied by all the ecclesiastics in solemn procession, and an innumerable concourse of people, who transported it to the monastery of S. Mary of the Roses, since called of S. Rose, after the saint. There she lies even unto this day, a mirror of sanctity. And now was fulfilled the holy maiden's prophecy, for she foretold these nuns, that when dead she should be received by them with joy and gratitude. Pope Alexander the Fourth had known Rose well during her life, and all her mortifications and virtues, and her miracles; he knew that Pope Innocent, his predecessor, had ordered a process of her sanctity to be written during her life; he had

himself seen her in spirit, then in flesh, so that these testimonies from heaven and from earth, assured him of her glory and beatitude. So when he translated this sacred body to the monastery of S. Mary of the Roses with many miracles, and the universal applause of clergy and laity, he required no additional proofs; but he declared her a saint, and publicly told these nuns that he intended to canonize her solemnly, so that she might be honoured and reverenced by all. At this time, His Holiness was obliged to absent himself from Viterbo, so he delayed the solemn canonization, and although he returned with the same intention, he was so reduced by sickness, that he died suddenly in this same town, without having effected the holy maiden's public beatification. However, after the declaration made by the Pope, she was adored by all as a saint. The convent and the church were no longer called by their old titles of S. Mary of the Roses of the order of S. Damian, with the rule of S. Benedict, but took the name of S. Rose with the order of S. Clare, together with S. Francis's rule, which the blessed young virgin always professed. From this time they began to celebrate the feast of the Translation of S. Rose's body on the 4th day of September, as it continued to this day, and her images and paintings are venerated like those of other saints. There are two very ancient pictures to be seen painted on wood in her monastery at Viterbo, one on the left side of S. Clare ; the other on the right side of S. Catherine, virgin and martyr.

THE LIFE

OF THE

BLESSED MARY OF OIGNIES.

THE LIFE

OF THE

BLESSED MARY OF OIGNIES.

PROLOGUE TO FULCO, BISHOP OF TOULOUSE.

OF THE GREAT SANCTITY OF MANY WOMEN IN THE DIOCESE OF LIEGE.

Our Lord commanded his disciples to "gather up the fragments that remain, lest they be lost." What should we learn from this but that, as they collected the fragments after supper, so we should call to mind the bright examples of the saints after their departure out of this world, and so replenish the scrips of Christ's poor, and of His little, ones with the sweet memorials which they have left behind them, since even the dogs may eat of the crumbs that fall from their Lord's table?

It was from this cause that the holy Fathers of old, keeping in mind the strict account they would have to give of the talents committed to them, wrote an account of the eminent virtues and noble actions of the saints, for the benefit of future gene-

rations, hoping that they would tend not only to confirm the faith of the wavering, and instruct the ignorant, but also that they would excite the slothful to action, and the earnest-minded to imitation, while at the same time they confounded those who remained obstinate in unbelief. We see, for example, how the holy Father, Jerome, occupied himself in this way; what trouble he took to make himself thoroughly acquainted with the lives of the Egyptian Fathers; how careful he was not to let them slip from his mind until he had committed them to paper; thus collecting faggots as it were to kindle a sacred fire in the hearts of the future generations for whom he wrote.

Blessed Gregory, too, the sweet psalmist of the Christian Church, inspired by the Holy Spirit, was no less eagerly bent on the same pursuit. Like one carefully collecting the sacred ashes from different sacrificial altars, and laying them up in some place prepared to receive them, so did he carefully collect together the most eminent examples of Italian sanctity and embrace them in one narrative in his Dialogues, to be treasured up in pure and faithful souls; that like the people of Israel, when they partook of the Paschal Lamb, their feet might be guarded by the examples of the saints; and that they, who if left without assistance, and drawn only with the cords of discipline, might be cut and wounded by them, might, by the aid and example of the saints of old times, be safely extricated from the mire of this world, as Jeremiah was drawn out of the dungeon by Abdemelech, by means of the old rags of the store-

house. For many can be moved by example who are not in the least affected by precept. It was on this account that the holy and venerable Bishop of Toulouse, when he was driven from his own city by the heretics, and had come to Belgium to seek for help against the enemies of the faith, went on to the territory of Liège, being attracted thither by the fame of some champions of the Christian religion in those parts. And in truth, when he was come there, he could not sufficiently admire the faith and devotion which he found prevailing, especially among the women, who were full of reverence and devotion for the Church and her holy sacraments; and that, too, in a country where these were despised by many, and but little regarded by almost all. This made him very anxious to collect some scraps, as it were, of the examples of sanctity which he had witnessed.

You, O Holy Father, who are not only shepherd of the Christian flock at Toulouse, but a strong pillar of the Universal Church, I call on you, at whose command and even reproof on account of my negligence, I have ventured to undertake this work. You have still fresh in your remembrance the feeling of being, as it were, in the land of promise when you visited these parts. I well remember your speaking to me of having left the Egypt of your own land, and after passing over a weary desert, of your finding in the country of Liège, the promised land. You found amongst us many distinguished from the heretics by the sign of the Cross, full of fervent faith, wondrously

patient under affliction, and zealous in all works of charity. You found, too, as I have heard you say with joy, many holy women among us who mourned more over one venial sin than the people of your own country would have done over a thousand mortal ones. You found, by your own observation, that what you have heard of us, incredible as it seemed, was in reality true.

First, you saw in the gardens of the Lord, those lilies of beauty, Christian virgins. You saw large bands of these holy women, despising carnal delights and the riches of this world through their longing desire after a heavenly kingdom, and clinging to the Eternal Spouse by the bands of poverty and humility. You found them earning a poor subsistence by the work of their hands, and though their parents abounded in wealth, yet preferring to forget their own people and their father's house, and to endure the straits of poverty, rather than enjoy ill-gotten wealth, or remain to their souls' peril among proud souls and those given up to the pomps of the world. You saw there, with great joy, holy matrons, serving God with all their heart, and carefully watching over the chastity of young maidens, confirming them in their holy resolution, and directing them by well-timed suggestions to spend the flower and strength of their affections, not on an earthly, but a heavenly spouse. Widows also you found there, serving God in fasting, praying, watching, hard labour and tears, in order that at least their endeavours to please their Lord and Saviour in the spirit, might not fall short of their former endeavours to

please their earthly lords in the flesh, but rather might far outstrip them. They kept that saying of the apostle continually in mind, that the widow that liveth in pleasures is dead while she liveth ; while they that communicate to the necessities of the saints, that wash the feet of the poor, that follow after hospitality, and are given up to works of mercy, obtain fruit an hundred-fold. Moreover, you saw and rejoiced on seeing other devout women offering an acceptable service to the Lord, by bringing up their offspring in the fear of God, by preserving their marriage vows in purity, and their bed undefiled, by abstaining for a time in order to give themselves to prayer, and returning together again in the fear of God, lest they should be tempted by Satan. And among these not a few, by the consent of their husbands, abstaining even from permitted embraces, and living in continence an angelic life, were made worthy of so much the brighter crown, because they walked unhurt even in the midst of the flames. On the other hand, you saw, with wonder and with grief, some men of impure minds, the enemies of all religion, maliciously calumniating the devout practices of these women, and ripping up and tearing to pieces, like mad dogs, characters so unlike themselves ; and when, at last, they could do no more, they branded them with some names of reproach which they invented, imitating the Jews who called Christ a Samaritan, and the Christians Galileans. What wonder ? For as the Egyptians abhor sheep, so do crafty and designing knaves hate innocence

and simplicity, and sots and drunkards laugh at the life of the temperate.

It happened about this time, that a certain Cistercian monk, belonging to the abbey of Alne, hearing of the strange names which these good people were called, and wondering in the simplicity of his heart what sort of people they could be, to be so ill spoken of, was told by the Holy Spirit, as he was praying one day, that these who were so maligned would be found firmly rooted in faith, and full of charitable deeds. From that time the old monk could never endure any ill to be spoken of them in his hearing. But they with wonderful patience, endured all the reproaches and persecutions which were heaped upon them, keeping continually in mind what is said in the Gospel; If you had been of the world, the world would love its own; the servant is not greater than his master; if they have persecuted Me, so will they persecute you. And because they adhered to God in all sincerity and truth, that which was said by our Lord, by their fruits ye shall know them, was illustrated in the destruction of the city of Liège. For then they who had not the opportunity of taking sanctuary, cast themselves headlong into the river, choosing rather to lose their life than their chastity. Others again leaped into the sinks and sewers, being ready to endure every sort of filth, rather than be despoiled of their virginity. Yet the Heavenly Bridegroom guarded His spouses with so much care and watchfulness, that of so

great a number not one suffered any loss either of life or chastity.

One of these holy women, who was nearly perishing in the water, was rescued by two of the enemy, who came to her assistance in a boat, and having saved her from drowning, and got her safe out, wished to abuse her, but she, like a lamb in the midst of wolves, or like a dove pursued by hawks, preferred to run the chance of being drowned again, than to lose her virtue, and so she leaped from the vessel into the water, but as the boat was upset by her doing so, the two men were thrown out and drowned, while she, being carried down by the stream, was borne safely to the shore without any hurt, either of body or soul.

Another still more wonderful thing happened. After a time there was a terrible famine, which prevailed throughout the kingdom of the Franks, besides a great part of Germany, and it lasted so long that people of both sexes were dying everywhere, both in the towns and the country, with hunger, and even those who had before been men of substance, were now compelled to beg in the streets, and ever so many of them perished at last. Yet out of all this multitude of holy women not one was discovered who either died of want, or was compelled openly to beg.

Let us now come to particular instances. And here I call you, holy Father, to witness, who have seen with your own eyes the wonderful works of God, and the divers gifts and graces that were manifested in different persons. One there was that received such grace from above, as you

yourself found out, as to have the power of discovering sins which had not been blotted out by a true confession, and in this way she was, under God, the means of saving many, by reminding them of these sins, and urging them to confess them.

Others you found so absorbed in the love of God, which they possessed in a singular or rather a wonderful degree, that through the violence of their affection they pined away, and became so weak, that for many years they could scarcely rise from their beds, and yet this debility had no other cause but Him only for whom they thirsted, so that whilst they rested sweetly on Him, their bodily strength diminished in proportion as the strength of the soul increased, and their hearts cried out, though through humility their tongues were silent, "Fulcite me floribus, stipate me malis, quia amore langueo." There was one whose face wasted away, and her cheeks fell in through the excess of her love, and a great many were so full of spiritual sweetness in their hearts, that they seemed almost to taste it in their mouths, and it drew from them tears of joy and peace, and filled their hearts with devotion. Several, indeed, had so great a gift of tears, that whenever God was in their thoughts, streams flowed from their eyes through the intensity of their devotion, and at length their cheeks were furrowed by continual weeping. And yet these tears did not exhaust the head, but rather they watered the heart, they dropped unction into the soul, they wonderfully refreshed the

body, and rejoiced the city of God by their plentiful streams.

Others, again, were so carried out of, and above themselves, by their plentiful draughts of the Holy Spirit, that they passed nearly the whole day in an ecstatic silence. So long as the Great King deigned to repose within them, they had no perception of anything that was going on about them. So much did the peace of God mount above and, as it were, bury the senses, that they could neither be awakened by any noise, nor made to feel any hurt inflicted on their body. Even pricking them repeatedly had no effect. I have myself seen a religious, who had been kept prisoner in a convent for about thirty years by her Heavenly Spouse, and that, too, so forcibly, that, she could not by any means go out, no, not if a thousand men were to drag her by the hand; for, indeed, she did try to go out several times, and had some persons endeavouring to drag her, but it was of no use, she might more easily have been torn asunder.

I have seen another who was frequently in an ecstasy, sometimes as often as five-and-twenty times in one day. I have myself seen her in this state more than seven times. Whenever she was affected in this way she remained stationary, until she returned to herself. Yet she was so wonderfully supported by her guardian angel that however ill-balanced her posture was, yet she never fell. Sometimes if the ecstasy came on as she was lifting her hand, it would remain suspended in that position. Then when she

recovered, she was so full of joy and rapture in the thought of what she had seen and experienced, that she was forced, like David, when he danced before the ark, to give vent to her internal joy by external movements, so that she might have said with truth, my heart and my flesh rejoice in the living God. There were some who when they received that Bread which came down from heaven, were not only refreshed in spirit, but felt a sensible sweetness in their mouth, and consolation of heart, sweeter to them than honey and the honeycomb. The sweet taste of that Flesh of the True Lamb which they had partaken of, not only filled their heart to overflowing, but reached even to their bodily taste. Then, again, others were attracted by the blessed Sacrament as by some sweet odour, and so earnest were their longings, that they could not endure to be without it long, nor had they either rest or consolation, but pined and languished until their souls were continually quickened by this Divine food. Should not this make infidels and heretics blush with shame at their hardness of heart, and want of faith, who cannot perceive the sweetness of this bread of heaven. I knew one of these holy women to whom the Lamb of God Himself gave His own flesh, not permitting her to languish with desire any longer, and upon being thus refreshed she grew strong and well. I saw another on whom the Lord wrought a wondrous work, for after she had lain a long time lifeless, before she was buried her soul returned to her body, and she revived, having obtained per-

mission from God to go through her purgatory in this world. Accordingly she underwent many severe afflictions at God's hand. Sometimes she rolled herself in the fire, at other times she would go out in the depth of winter, and stand for a long time in freezing water. Sometimes she was driven into the tombs of the dead. At length, however, when her penance was finished, she lived in the greatest calm and peace, and God gave her such grace and power, that she was often caught up by the spirit and carried to purgatory, where she released many suffering souls, and conducted them to heaven, without any harm to herself.

But why should I go through all the various and wonderful gifts and graces possessed by different persons, when there was one precious pearl, who, like a carbuncle among other stones, or like the sun amidst the stars, possessed by herself nearly all these in perfection. It was the fame of her wonderful character which attracted you to our country, where you found that the reality was greater even than the report, and you were wonderfully delighted with her even in your first acquaintance. For when she had remained now for nearly forty days without any food, and was expecting with great joy and ardour her blessed end, which could not be far off, you who had seen and heard many wonderful things of her, earnestly entreated me, since I was intimately acquainted with her, and knew her whole history, to write her life after her decease. Moreover, you wished me to write not her life only, but those also of other holy women of Liège, in whom the workings of

the Holy spirit were so wonderfully seen. Nevertheless, I could not be persuaded to commit to writing the lives and actions of those who still survived, for however you urged that it would be useful to narrate some instances of holy men and women living in our own days, in your public discourses to the people, yet I felt certain that these holy persons could not endure themselves to be spoken of in this way. Lest, however, I should seem unmannerly in refusing your request, holy Father, I have determined to attempt the present work, relying on the aid of your prayers, impelled by your earnest desire, and by the hope of benefiting some of my readers. Like the apostle, then, I will collect a small bundle of sticks to kindle a fire in my own and other breasts, and though a viper will no doubt leap out on me, as it did on the apostle, and endeavour to fasten some venomous imputation on my good work, yet I trust that like him I shall not in the end suffer any harm.

Though the carnal man cannot perceive the things of God, yet for the sake of those whom I hope to be of service to, I shall not desist from my design because it may be displeasing to some. For there are, I know, some, who being wise in their own conceit, but without the Spirit of God, will receive nothing which their reason cannot compass, and despise and mock what they cannot understand. Against these the apostle says, "Extinguish not the spirit, despise not prophecies," for those I am speaking of do extinguish the spirit and despise prophecies, inasmuch as they look

down upon spiritual men as madmen and idiots, and put aside the prophecies or revelations of the saints as they would do dreams or ghost stories. But the hand of the Lord is not shortened, and so from the very beginning to the present time, there has been no age in which the Holy Spirit has not wrought wonderful things in His saints, both openly and in secret. It is like the precious ointment which flowed from the head to the beard, and from the beard to the skirt of the garment, that is even to the latest saints of our own days. We will then put down for the glory of God, and of His handmaid, as well as for the comfort of her friends and companions in Christ, some of the things which we have seen and known, and for the most part had personal knowledge of. We say *some*, for it would be utterly impossible to collect all her wonderful actions, since in all those years in which she served God with all her heart, scarce a day or a night passed but what she enjoyed some visit from Almighty God, or His saints, or angels, with whom she spent nearly the whole of her time. In order, therefore, that in so great an assemblage of facts and stories, the reader may be able to find what he wants, I have put headings to the chapters, to serve as a guide to the contents of the work, so that the mind of the reader may not be confused or entangled in threading his way through such a maze of gleaming lights.

CHAPTER I.

THE EARLY HISTORY OF MARY OF OIGNIES.

In the diocese of Liège, in a town of the name of Nivelle, there lived a maiden distinguished no less by her holy life than by her sweet name, for she was called Mary. She was born of parents in the middle rank of life, but in such affluent circumstances that she was surrounded with comforts and luxuries, for which, however, she did not seem to have any taste. From her very birth, so much did she seem drawn to the sweets of a religious life, that she seldom or never joined her companions in their childish sports, or partook of their levity, but keeping herself unspotted by the desires of the flesh, or the vanities of the world, she gave early and plain indications of what she was going to be in more advanced age. Even at that time she used frequently to kneel down by her bedside in the night, and offer up to God some prayers which she had learned, as a kind of first fruits of her future life. As she grew in years, her love of poverty and of religion increased ; and she was so attracted by a kind of natural instinct to the monastic state, that when now and then some Cistercian monks passed by her father's door, she used to gaze at and watch them, to admire their habit, and timidly to

follow them, and not being able to show her love of them in any other way, she was fond of stepping after them in their footmarks. Then when her parents were going to deck her out after the fashion of worldly people in dress and finery, she would not have it. Just as if nature had engraved on her heart what the blessed apostle Peter says of women; "Whose adorning, let it not be the outward plaiting, or the wearing of gold, or the putting on of apparel;" or as S. Paul says, "Not with plaited hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array." But the parents of the child laughed at her behaviour, and used to say, "What a strange child that is of ours."

HER MARRIAGE.

Her parents, however, by no means liking her pious actions, determined to give her in marriage to a certain young man, when she was fourteen years old. Accordingly she was married, and being separated by this circumstance from her parents, she burst forth as it were into fresh flames of fervour. So severely did she chastise her body, and bring it into subjection, that frequently after having spent a great part of the night in laborious work, and then given up a considerable space of time to prayer, she lastly was wont, when she was permitted, to lay herself down on some chips of wood and pieces of stick, which

she had hidden in the bed, and so snatch a hasty repose. Abroad, however, since she could not do as she liked, she used to wear a rough piece of rope under her clothes, and so reduced her body wonderfully. This I mention not to sanction any thing excessive, but to show her great fervour. Let the prudent reader remember with respect to these and a great many other things which, by the special grace of God, she did, that the privilege of a select few does not constitute a common law. Let us endeavour to imitate her virtues; as for the particular acts which proceeded from her virtues, these without a special gift of grace we cannot imitate, for though the body is to be forced, that it may become obedient to the spirit, and we must strive to bear in our own body the stigmata of the Lord Jesus, yet we must not forget that the King's honour loveth judgment, and that a sacrifice made from spoiling the poor is not acceptable to God. Accordingly what we should aim at is not so much to withdraw the necessaries of life from our poor body as to restrain its vices. Those things which we read of as having been done by saints, at the suggestion of the Holy Spirit, we should endeavour rather to admire than to imitate.

OF THE CONVERSION OF HER HUSBAND AND THEIR DOMESTIC LIFE.

After Mary had thus lived with her husband John for a little time, the Lord regarded the

lowliness of his handmaid, and answered her tears and supplications. For her husband John, who had hitherto regarded her as his wife, all at once, as if by divine inspiration, looked upon her as commended to his charge, like Mary the spouse of Joseph. God committed His chaste handmaid to the keeping of His no less chaste servant, that she might have the comfort of a guardian, and that, having a faithful steward to watch over secular affairs, she might be more disengaged to serve the Lord. Before this he had yielded to the holy purpose of his wife, merely from the gentleness and kindness of an indulgent husband, and had good-naturedly borne with her, though he looked on her strictness with a sort of compassion. But now, having received the requisite grace in a divine visitation, he not only led for the future a continent or rather an angelic life, but even followed the footsteps of his holy spouse in her holy resolutions and pious works, spending all for the love of Christ. The more he was separated from her in human affection, the more closely was he bound to her by the ties of spiritual union. Accordingly our Lord afterwards promised her in a vision, that He would give her back her husband to be her companion in heaven, in reward for what they had given up, inasmuch as through the love of chastity he had renounced all carnal joy. Let those unhappy persons whose guilty love is unsanctioned and unsanctified by the sacrament of marriage, blush and tremble when they see these two holy persons in the bloom of youth abstain-

ing, for Christ's sake, even from what was lawful, overcoming passion by the fervour of divine love, quenching the fire of earth by that of heaven, and so earning for themselves crowns of triumph. God, however, gave them in their own house, and within their own walls, a place and a name better than that of sons and daughters. They resembled those blessed martyrs whom the flames could not hurt. Surrounded with abundance of this world's delights they sacrificed their own inclinations, they thirsted by the side of streams, they hungered in the midst of dainty viands, and crucified their flesh, nailing it to the cross with the fear of God. So entirely did they despise and renounce their own inclination in the love of God, that, for some time, they tended some leprous persons in a place called Willambrock, near the city of Nivelle.

OF THE CONTEMPT AND SCORN WITH WHICH THEY WERE TREATED.

These good works excited the attention and the envy of the devil. Their friends, too, and relations in the world were enraged against them. When they were rich and in prosperity they had courted and admired them. Now that, for Christ's sake, they had, of their own accord, become poor, they laughed at and despised them. They were esteemed vile and worthless for Christ's sake. The reproaches of those who reproached

Him fell on them; but let not the handmaid of Christ fear to follow the example of Christ in embracing the reproach of the cross in preference to the transient pleasures and honours of the world. For her it is better to be in a low place in God's house than to dwell in the tabernacle of sinners. She has, it is true, lost the friendship of relatives and friends; but she has, in place of it, acquired the friendship of Christ. Let her not think, moreover, that she has lost the love of friends. Rather she never had it; for they loved not her but hers. For as flies settle upon honey, and wolves on a carcase, so friends, for the most part, look rather to what is to be got from a man, than to the man himself.

OF MARY'S COMPUNCTION OF HEART.

God is good to those who place their hope in Him, and faithful to those who wait on Him. When his handmaid Mary gave up the kingdoms of the world, and despised all their glory for love of Him, He recompensed her a hundred fold in this world, and gave her life eternal in the next. Consider how he ornamented this soul, whom He loved, with every virtue, like a vessel of pure gold beautified with every kind of rare and precious stone; and how, He glorified her, despised as she was by men of the world, with the most wonderful miracles. The cross and passion of her Saviour was the beginning of her conversion and the first

fruits of her love. She heard Thy voice and was afraid; she considered Thy works and trembled. For when on a certain day, having been visited and assisted by her Saviour's presence, she pondered the immense benefits, which in His human nature He had conferred on man, she received so great a gift of compunction and such a flow of tears, which poured forth from the winepress of the Passion, that her steps might be traced in the church she was walking in, by her tears on the pavement. And from this time she could not for a long while either look at a crucifix, or speak of the Passion, or even hear others speak of it, without fainting. In order, therefore, to soothe her grief, and to stay for a while the flood of her tears, she elevated her mind to the contemplation of Christ's Divinity and glorious Majesty, that she might find consolation in the thought of His impassibility. But this consideration, by which she hoped to restrain the torrent of her tears, only served to make them flow afresh. The thought of who He was who suffered such vile indignities for our sake, made her grief burst out again, and the sweet compunction that she felt in her soul renewed her tears. On one occasion just before Easter, when she was bewailing the approaching sufferings of her Lord with groans and sobs, and a more than usual quantity of tears, as if she were partaking in His death, one of the priests of the church gently chid her and bade her restrain her tears and pray silently. Accordingly she, after her usual manner, endeavouring modestly, and with the simplicity of a dove, to obey every one, as she

knew that it was beyond her power to do this, withdrew from the church, and retired into a secret place where none could see her. Here she applied herself to earnest prayer, and entreated her Lord with many tears to show that priest that it is not in the power of man to restrain the gush of tears, since when He bloweth with His wind the waters flow. Accordingly God opened the flood-gates, as the priest celebrated mass that day, and none could shut them ; He sent forth His waters and they flooded the earth. The soul of the priest was so overcome with this gush of tears that he was well nigh choked. And the more he endeavoured to restrain these torrents that fell from him, so much the more did they flow, until not only he, but the book and the altar-covering were wet. What could he say or do, after having so heedlessly chid the handmaid of tht Lord? He now found out by experience, and not without shame, what before he wanted humility and commiseration to discover. At last, after many sobs, and being very often interrupted in mass by fresh bursts of tears, the floods which overwhelmed him ceased to flow. This was related by one who was present and had seen all that passed. Some time after mass was over the handmaid of Christ returned ; and going to the priest, she related, as if she had herself been present, all that had passed. "Now," she said, "you learn by your own experience, that it is not in the power of man to withhold the force of the winds which blow by the might of the Holy Spirit." Her tears, however, continued

to flow day and night in one perpetual torrent; they would have dropped from her cheeks, and mingled with the dust on the pavement of the church, if the wimple which she wore around her head had not caught them. She used many of these linen veils, because she had continually to change them before the deluge of tears had passed away. As I felt a great deal of sympathy and commiseration for her, I once asked her, after her long fasts and continual watches, as well as torrents of tears, whether she did not feel her head pained or injured by this continual drain. She answered, "No; it is these tears which refresh me. These are my meat day and night; they do not hurt my head, and they sustain my mind. So far from causing me any pain, they suffuse a sweetness over my whole soul. So far from emptying my head, they fill it with heavenly thoughts and consolations, since they are not forced out with effort, but are supplied in abundance from above."

CHAPTER II.

HER GREAT INNOCENCE OF LIFE.

After speaking of her great compunction, I must next say a few words of her confessions. As for mortal sin, I take God to witness that I could never find that she was guilty of one either of word or deed throughout the whole course of her life.

And if, by chance, she thought that she had committed ever so small a venial sin, she presented herself to the priest with so much heartfelt sorrow, with so much fear and shame, and such deep contrition, that she very often seemed like a woman in travail, compelled to cry out through the extremity of her pangs. Yet she was so watchful, even against little and venial faults, that it frequently happened that, for a whole fortnight together, she could not find one inordinate thought to confess. And as it is the sign of a truly religious mind to be conscious of faults even where there are none, she used to throw herself at the priest's feet, accusing herself, and confessing with tears, something which we could scarcely refrain from laughing at; perhaps, for instance, some silly words which she remembered to have used when a child. When, however, she had got past childish ways and thoughts, she guarded her soul with so much anxiety, she kept so strict a watch over her senses, and was so careful to preserve purity of heart, having ever before her that text, "He that despises small things shall fall by little and little," that rarely or never could an idle word or incautious look, nor negligent bearing, nor unrecollected countenance, nor careless posture of body be observed in her. Yet with all this self-restraint, through the excessive joy of her heart, she could scarce contain herself, so that frequently she betrayed her feelings either by the increased cheerfulness and brightness of her countenance, or the quickness of her movements, and gave utterance to them in

moderate laughter, or by sweetly, yet modestly, embracing some of her companions, or by kissing through her excessive devotion, the hands or feet of some priest. And even when she had recovered from these fits of overflowing joy, and reviewed at night all the actions of the day, if after severely weighing them, she found that she had exceeded in the least degree the bounds of moderation, she confessed her fault with wonderful contrition, and imposed some penance on herself. And often she was full of fear and trembling, when after all, she had not done anything. While we, just because we wished to indulge our own sloth and negligence, used to find fault with her for confessing such trifles, oftener than we liked.

HER SPIRIT OF PENANCE.

Having spoken of Mary's confession, let us next see how zealously and skilfully she immolated herself to God, and what delight she took in embracing the Cross and afflicting her body. She thought well on those words of our Lord in which He gave his disciples their first lesson, the very primary foundation of all Evangelical morals, "Whosoever will come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow Me;" and she made it her endeavour to follow Christ

by the three steps here referred to. For she not only renounced what was her neighbour's, by not desiring it, and what was her own by leaving it; nor did she only deny her body by afflicting it, but she denied herself also, by bidding farewell for ever to her own inclinations. Thus then she denied herself by submitting herself to another by obedience; she bore her cross by afflicting her body with constant fasting and abstinence; and she followed Christ by casting herself utterly away by humility. And having once tasted of the spirit, all carnal pleasures became insipid to her, so that when she remembered how, upon occasion of her recovery from a dangerous illness, she had for a short time been obliged to live on flesh meat and wine, such was her horror at the thought of this past gratification that she could find no rest to her soul, until she had wondrously compensated for these past pleasures, such as they were, by the torture of her body. She was, as it were, drunk with fervour of spirit; the sweetness of the Paschal Lamb gave her so great a loathing for her own flesh, that she cut off with a knife considerable pieces of it, which through modesty and humility she buried in the ground. And because all inflamed with divine love, she despised the pain of her wounds, she was permitted to see one of the heavenly seraphs during this ecstasy, standing near her. The women who washed her body after her death, saw with wonder the scars of these wounds; but those who had known the whole matter from her confession, knew what they were. Let those who

wonder at St. Simeon Stylites, and the maggots which swarmed from his wounds, and the blessed Antony, who burned his feet with fire, be astonished also at the extraordinary fortitude of one of the weaker sex, who wounded by love and quickened by the wounds of Christ, thought nothing of her own.

HER FASTING.

The servant of God was endued with so much grace for fasting, that on the days on which it was necessary for the support of her weak frame to take some nourishment, as though it had been medicine, she only took it once in the day, and then very little, taking it in the evening during summer, and in winter not till the first hour of the night. She never ate flesh meat, nor drank wine, and if she occasionally took fish, which she did but very seldom, it was only of the poorest kind. She supported herself, as she best could, on fruit, herbs, and vegetables. For a long time she lived upon bread so coarse and black, that a dog could scarcely have eaten it; and it was so hard and rough, that her throat was often torn and bleeding from eating it. But when she thought of Christ, she was well pleased to shed her blood; His wounds soothed hers, and the harshness of her hard bread was tempered by the sweetness of the bread from heaven. Once as she was at her meal, she saw

the old serpent withering with envy, and not being able to do anything else, reproaching her with being gluttonous, and indulging herself too much. For her stomach being worn and weakened by long fasting, could sometimes scarcely bear food at all; and as its weak state made it reject food or distend with a very small quantity, it gave her great pain, as if she had been taking too much.

However she was not deceived by the crafty wiles of the devil, but knew that he was aiming at disturbing her mind with scruples, in order that she might faint through excessive abstinence, and so she only laughed at him, and endeavoured to eat all the more, the more the malicious serpent was vexed at it. For whether she ate, or whether she fasted, she did all to the glory of God. For three years running she fasted on bread and water from Holy Cross day to Easter, and suffered no detriment in doing so either in health or capacity for work. Whenever she refreshed her poor and worn body with bread and water, which she did towards the evening or after dark, in her cell under the church, she always had some angels present, who assisted at her frugal meal, from the time of blessing the food till after returning thanks. She saw them before her, as it were, ascending and descending a glorious ladder, and their company gave her so much joy and consolation, that all pleasure of the appetite was entirely overcome by the spiritual sweetness she experienced. Sometimes, too, St. John the Evangelist, for whom she

had a particular love and devotion, would come to her table when she was at her meal, upon which her appetite entirely forsook her through her excessive devotion, so that it was with difficulty she could swallow the smallest mouthful. In this way our Lord rewarded her for the bodily pleasures which she had renounced for His sake by spiritual delights, as it is written; "Man does not live by bread alone." And she was so strengthened by the virtue of this heavenly food, that frequently for eight days, and sometimes for eleven, as, for instance, from Ascension to Pentecost, she would neither eat nor drink anything. And what may appear wonderful enough, she neither suffered from headache in consequence, nor did she relax her ordinary duties, but was as ready for work on the last day of her fast as she was on the first. Nor could she have eaten anything on those days even if she had wished to do so, until her sensual appetite, which was in a manner entirely absorbed by the spirit, had, so to speak, returned to itself again, for as long as her soul was filled with the abundance of heavenly food, it suffered her not to partake of any earthly refreshment.

On one occasion also she went for as long as thirty-five days without any sort of food, passing all the time in a tranquil and happy silence, during which she was reposing sweetly in her Lord. She could say nothing for many days but "Give me the body of our Lord Jesus Christ," and as soon as her request was granted, she returned

to her former silent converse with her Saviour. In those days she felt as if her soul was separated from her body, and only contained in her body as if in an earthen vessel, with which it was clothed and encased; so entirely was she drawn away from sensible things, and carried out of herself in ecstasy. But at length, after five weeks, returning to herself, to the wonder of those who were present, she began to speak and to take food. But for a long time afterwards she could not in any way endure even the smell of meat, or of anything cooked, nor of wine, unless it was an ablution after the Blessed Sacrament, which was sometimes given her, in which case she minded neither the smell nor the taste. When, too, on the occasion of her going to the Sacrament of Confirmation, she had to pass through some villages, she suffered no inconvenience from those smells, which before she had found intolerable.

CHAPTER III.

HER ASSIDUITY IN PRAYER, AND ITS EFFICACY IN DRIVING AWAY THE DEVIL.

The more care she took to reduce and chasten her body with fasting, the more freely did her spirit nourish itself in prayer, for while her frame was weakened by abstinence, her soul was

strengthened in the Lord. She obtained from God the grace of prayer in so extraordinary a degree, that she seldom or never relaxed her unwearied spirit from prayer by night or day, but either by the silent cry of her heart to the Lord, or by the outward expression of the lips, echoing the feelings of her heart, she continued praying without intermission. And so continual was the incense of prayer that ascended in the sight of the Lord from the altar of her heart, that even when she stretched forth her hands to do good works, and her fingers laid hold on the distaff, her Psalter would ever lie open before her, and from thence she would pour forth sweet psalms to God, by which, as it were by nails, in a wondrous way she united her heart to the Lord, and kept it from wandering abroad.

If at any time she offered special prayers in behalf of some one, God answered her in spirit, for her devotion had so closely united her to God, that she could feel when her request was granted, by the sweet unction of her prayer, for she could generally tell from her heightened or diminished fervour whether or not she had been heard. On one occasion, when she prayed for the soul of a deceased person, it was answered her, "Pray not for him, for God has rejected him," for he had died miserably from a wound which he had received while fighting in a tournament, and had been condemned to eternal flames. Another day, as she was in her cell, adjoining the Church of Oignies, she saw a great many hands lifted up as if in supplication

to her; wondering what could be the reason of this, and partly through fear, she ran into the church. Again, on another occasion, she saw these same hands in her cell, and being frightened, she again sought refuge in the church, though she was restrained by the hands, which endeavoured to detain her. Then having recourse to the church, as to a tabernacle where she might enquire of the Lord, she besought Him to tell her what those hands meant. God answered her, that the souls in purgatory, which were suffering for their offences, sought the benefit of her prayers, for that they felt their pains soothed and lessened by them, as if a precious oil were poured upon their wounds. For indeed it sometimes happened that through the sweetness of divine contemplation, she intermitted her usual prayers, and sometimes could not even open her mouth or do anything but think of God.

It was her custom, by way of pilgrimage, and prayer, to visit once every year the church of the Blessed Virgin Mary of Heignies, where she received great consolations from the Mother of God. This church was distant two long miles from the place where she lived, yet in the midst of the frost and snow of the severest part of the winter, she would nevertheless walk all the way with bare feet, and never received any hurt from so doing. The way she had to go was by a very winding and circuitous path through a forest, with which she was very little acquainted, and she was accompanied only by a single maid servant; yet she never missed her way, for a light

was always seen going before her to direct her. During the whole of the day when she made her journey she ate nothing, and then remained watching in the church during the whole night, and fasted till the evening of the following day. Yet notwithstanding this, she returned home without difficulty, for the angels upheld her on the right hand and on the left. God had given His angels charge over her, to keep her in all her ways, and in their hands to bear her up, lest perhaps she might hurt her foot against a stone. If, as sometimes happened, a violent storm of rain overtook her on her journey, and she was too thinly clad to resist it, she would look up and see some stars as it were accompanying her, and withholding the rain, and so she remained untouched amidst the torrents that were descending around her.

On some occasions when the offering of her heart was richer than usual, and her soul was replenished as with marrow and fatness, she could not cease from prayer; and so she would spend the whole day and night in saluting the Blessed Virgin, and genuflecting to her hundreds and thousands of times. And she would continue this strange and unheard-of devotion for forty days. She would begin by genuflecting six hundred times continuously in the impetuosity of her fervour. Next she read through the entire Psalter, standing, and at the end of each Psalm offered the Angelical Salutation on her knees in honour of the Blessed Virgin. Then when her fervour of spirit increased, she would give her-

self at each genuflection three hundred blows with her discipline, and so immolate herself to God and the Blessed Virgin by a slow martyrdom. At the three last inflictions she would draw blood in profusion, as if to crown the whole. And lastly, she consummated the sacrifice with fifty genuflections. But all this she did, not by human strength, but by the support and assistance of angels. The virtue and efficacy of her prayers was experienced not only by men, who were benefited by them, but by the devils, who were tormented by them, and who were so goaded on and maddened by the fire and heat of her prayers, that they were, as it were, bound with chains, and compelled to come to her, sometimes gnashing their teeth at her, sometimes howling, and complaining bitterly of her, and sometimes supplicating. For if any one of her acquaintance was molested by any temptation, this precious pearl of Christ was so melted with compassion, that she never rested till by the weight of her earnest supplications she had overwhelmed the author of evil with confusion, and liberated the poor and needy from him that was too strong for him.

One of her chief friends was assailed with great subtlety, and so with all the greater danger, by the noonday devil who goeth about in darkness. The crafty enemy transforming himself into an angel of light, appeared familiarly to her friend in sleep, and under the appearance of piety, sometimes blamed him for certain faults, sometimes exhorted him to perform certain good

works. This he did in order that by first giving him the semblance of an antidote, he might afterwards instil his poison with greater secresy, and having first inserted his honied tongue, afterwards pierce him with his fang. For when faith was once reposed in him as in one who spoke truth, then like a sophist, the traitor began to mix truth with falsehood, in order that by the admixture of good he might cast a veil over the evil. At last he so gained that brother by his machinations, that things would have had a fearful termination with him, if the handmaid of Christ had not learned the wily deceits of the enemy by the revelation of the Holy Spirit. When she told him that those revelations were not from God, but were illusions of the devil, he answered, not by the suggestion of the Holy Spirit, but of himself; "That spirit has done me such great service, and has foretold so many things to me, which have come true, that he cannot be deceiving me." Upon this she betook herself to her usual weapons of prayer, she watered the feet of the Lord with her tears, she knocked at the gate of heaven with her earnest prayers, and did not cease until that impious impostor appeared to her, as she was praying by night in her cell, covered with shame, and groaning aloud. She looked at him, robed in his fictitious splendour, and said to him, "Who art thou, and by what name art thou called?" He looked proudly and fiercely at her, and said, "I am he whom thou, accursed as thou art, hast compelled by thy prayers to come to thee, since

thou art thus carrying off my friend by force. My name is Dream, because I appear to many, and especially religious, in their sleep, like Lucifer, and they obey me, their minds are elated by my consolations, and they think themselves worthy of enjoying divine and angelic discourse. That friend of mine, whom you have taken from me, I was about to have turned away, according to the wish of my fellows, from his good resolutions." This, indeed, was shewn by the course of events, for the adder's eggs were broken, and the crafty designs of that malignant one were brought to light.

Again, there was a girl who lived in a convent of the Cistercian order, and served God in the religious habit. The old serpent saw this and was filled with envy, all the more malignant because so severe a rule of life had been embraced by one so young, and of the weaker sex. Seeing, then, that she was of a timid and retiring character, and, at the same time, artless and simple-minded, he harassed the innocent virgin with all sorts of blasphemous and foul thoughts, in order that through immoderate fear, and low spirits, he might lead her to despair. Accordingly, as she was without knowledge or experience of such temptations, and, at the same time, easily frightened, at the very first entrance of such thoughts into her head, she thoughts he had lost her faith. For some time she resisted, in great affliction, but at length, not being able to endure it, and not opening the state of her mind to any one, to procure a remedy, she fell

from pusillanimity almost into despair; and the malignant enemy had overcome her so completely, that she could not recite even the Lord's Prayer or the Creed. Neither would she confess her sins; or if at any time she was moved by entreaties, or driven by threats to confess some things, yet she could by no means be induced to ask pardon of the Lord. She could not be present while the sacraments were administered; she would not receive the Lord's Body, and often her mental agitation was such that she attempted to kill herself. She spurned the Word of God and salutary admonitions; she began to hate everything that was good; and the devil uttered many blasphemies by her mouth. The pious sisters made many prayers to our Lord in her behalf, but they could not at once cast out this kind of evil spirit even by prayer and fasting, nor rescue their dove as yet from the devil's jaws. Not because their kind Spouse despised the prayers of so many holy virgins, but because He would keep this most malignant devil to be overcome and cast out by His spiritual handmaid, who, by the mighty efficacy of her prayers, would open the jaws of Leviathan, and wrench the spoil from between his teeth.

When, therefore, the maiden was brought to the handmaid of the Lord, she, abounding with the spirit of compassion and the honey of spiritual sweetness, received her with the greatest kindness, not only into her cell with liberal hospitality, but what is more, into her heart, by

the spirit of love. Yet, although she poured forth prayers in abundance to the Lord in her behalf, yet the foul spirit, thinking that he had firm possession of the maiden, would not leave her. Whereupon, sacrificing herself still more to God, she fasted with many prayers and tears for forty days, without eating anything; but interruptedly, so as to take refreshment twice or thrice in the week. At the end of this fast, the foul spirit was compelled to leave the damsel, and to present himself, covered with grief and confusion, before the handmaid of Christ; having been miserably fettered and punished by the angel of Christ, so that it seemed as if he had vomited his own bowels, and was obliged now to carry them on his shoulders. For what God does invisibly and secretly, He is sometimes pleased to make apparent by external signs. He, then, groaning and imploring her to pity him, asked her to give him some penance, for he said that he could not help doing whatever she enjoined him. Upon this, as she never presumed on her own light, nor did anything without counsel, she called a certain director, in whom she placed great confidence, and asked his advice. He thought it best that the evil spirit should be sent into the desert, so as never to be able to do hurt to any one till the Day of Judgment. As they were talking, a third person, who was well-known to them both, came in, and having heard what had happened, he urged them with great earnestness, as was usual with him, not to do this, for, thus he said, the traitor will escape;

but rather bid him descend immediately into the depths of hell. Accordingly she ordered him, and he instantly cast himself headlong, with a doleful howl, while the infernal spirits set up a long and dismal wailing, which she heard in spirit, while at the same time she saw a mighty prince approaching, at which, full of lowly fear and reverence, she returned thanks to the Lord. The damsel before spoken of found herself at liberty the same hour, and, having confessed, she received the Lord's Body, and returned home, giving thanks to God. Nevertheless, when after watching and praying a long while, she lay down to rest in her couch, the evil spirit appeared to her under various forms, gnashing his teeth at her, and uttering imprecations such as these :—"Mayest thou sleep uneasily, and have thy only rest in the regions of the damned, for I am as much pained at the quiet that thou enjoyest, as I am tormented by thy labours and prayers." She, however, only laughed at him ; and, making the sign of the cross, forced him to be gone.

CHAPTER IV.

HER WATCHINGS, HER DRESS, AND THE LABOURS WHICH SHE UNDERWENT.

Above all things, this wise and high-minded woman considered the waste of useless, or I should rather say, precious time to be an intolerable evil. For days go past, and do not come again; they slip away from us never to return. Thus, the loss of time is irreparable, for while other things may be recovered, days once lost can never be regained. Hence she took the greatest pains, that as far as was in her power, no hour of the night or day should pass by unemployed. She slept but little at night, remembering that no merit is gained during sleep, but that it has been mercifully left us by God for the refreshment of our frail nature. We cannot merit during our sleep, because so long as it lasts we have not the use of our own free will. Hence she abstained as much as possible from sleep, and gave herself up to serve God by nightly watching, and this with all the greater devotion, because she was not disturbed at that time by any external noise. Moreover, the virtue of abstinence which wasted and dried up her frame, as well as the fire of divine love which burned therein, destroyed all tendency to drowsiness in her. The sweet sing-

ing of the angelic spirits also, in whose company she frequently spent her watchful nights, drove away all sleep from her eyes without any uneasiness in consequence. For, when the crowd and noise of men was removed, in her nightly vigils, the host of blessed spirits would be her companions, and the sound of their voices like those of a great army, soothed her ears with a sweet harmony, and drove away all sleep. It refreshed her spirits, and filled her with a wondrous sweetness, it excited her soul to devotion, and inflamed her heart with a love of praise and thanksgiving. Often would she exclaim "Holy, Holy, Holy Lord," and move others to devotion by her example. Oh, that those miserable and infatuated women who kindle the flames of lust by their lascivious songs, would listen to this and mourn. By their very breath they light up the fires of lust, and so, far removed from the songs of angels, they perish in their own vanities; whose laughter shall be turned to mourning, whose joy into eternal woe, and whose songs into howls of lamentation. It is to these that God foretells, by the mouth of his prophet, that instead of a girdle there shall be to them a rope; instead of a sweet odour, there shall be a stink; and for well-braided hair, there shall be baldness.

Mary, on the contrary, because she spurned and cast away from her all the vain follies of the world, and the pomps of Satan, for the love of Christ, was permitted the far greater felicity of taking part amid the joyous exultation of the choirs of angels, who danced and sang to the

praise of God. And because she was wont to keep watch by night over the precious relics of the saints, with which the Church of Oignies was abundantly adorned, she was rewarded by receiving great joy and consolation from these relics, which kept, as it were, holiday with her as she guarded them, and filled her with mirth and gladness. And in her last illness they compassionately comforted her, promising to use their intercession with God, and to obtain a reward for her labours and watchings. There was, indeed, in her cell a little pallet, with some poor covering on it for a bed, but she seldom used it; her more frequent custom was to sit in the church, leaning her head against the wall, and so snatch a short sleep, refreshed with which she would return with renewed vigour, to the sweet occupation of watching.

Yet even the hours of sleep, short as they were, did not pass by without profit. For even when her body slept, her heart and soul kept watch with Him who was most in her thoughts when awake. Her dreams were ever about Christ; for as he that thirsts dreams in his sleep of the fountains of water, and the hungry man has visions of rich banquets, so she had ever before her eyes Him whom her soul desired, even in her sleep. For the eye is always directed towards that object on which our love is fixed; and where a man's treasure is, there will his heart be also, says our Lord; and, again, where I am, there shall also My servant be. Often did our Lord admonish her in sleep, as He did St.

Joseph and other saints, and reveal many things to her, that the time of sleep might not be without its fruit, and fulfilled in her the promise He made by His prophet, 'Your old men shall dream dreams, and your young men shall see visions.' Sometimes, indeed, she was permitted to take rest in her cell; but at other times, especially when some great festival was approaching, she could find no rest except in the presence of Christ in the Church. On these occasions she was constrained to remain there both day and night, nor could she do as she liked about remaining in the Church, or retiring to rest in her own cell; for she had to obey her guardian angel, who acted towards her as her own special superior, and sometimes when she was worn out with excessive watching, would bid her go to rest; and then when she was a little refreshed, would arouse her and make her return to the Church.

On one occasion, when he urged her on, and gave her special strength, her soul so clave to the dust of the Church, that from the feast of St. Martin to Lent, she would suffer nothing, not so much as a blade of grass, so to speak, between herself and the bare floor, whether she was sitting or lying down. When she slept she had nothing to rest her head upon but the ground, or, at most, the wooden platform of the altar. And this was in a winter when the cold was so severe, that even while the priest was celebrating, the wine in the sacred chalice was, as I well remember, visibly and suddenly turned into ice. She, however, neither felt the cold, nor

did her head suffer any pain, since the holy angel lovingly supported it. Woe to you who sleep, and are wanton in your soft beds and couches of ivory; who are given up to softness and luxury, dead and buried in pleasures; who spend your days in sensual enjoyments. In a moment you shall descend to the depths of hell, where worms shall be under you, and worms shall cover you. Behold the handmaid of Christ; because she has served her Lord devotedly, the earth serves her, so that she is neither bruised by the roughness of the ground, nor pinched by the cold of winter. The holy angels wait on her to keep her from all harm. But against you, ye senseless ones, the very earth shall fight in her Lord's behalf, and the creation shall be armed against the enemies of its Creator, and in obedience to His will shall be kindled against you for your torment.

OF HER MANNER OF DRESS.

She who was clothed with the fleece of the Immaculate Lamb, who was adorned interiorly with the nuptial garment, and had put on Christ within her heart, cared little for external ornament. In her dress, however, she kept the mean, since she neither liked an affectation of negligence or slovenliness in dress, nor, on the other hand, any refinement of neatness and elegance.

Ornament and want of cleanliness she alike avoided, since the one savours of luxurious refinement, and the other of vain-glory. Yet she did not forget that the Blessed John Baptist was commended by our Lord for his coarse and rough clothing, and that He, the Truth itself, has said: "They that wear soft clothing are in the houses of kings." Accordingly, instead of linen, she wore a coarse hair-cloth next her skin, such as is commonly called estamine. She had a tunic of white wool, with a plain cloak of the same colour, without any ornament of fur, or any padding; imitating in this, the simplicity of our first parents, whose nakedness God clothed after their fall, not with precious garments artificially coloured or ornamented, but with plain coats of skins. Contented with this simple dress, she felt no external cold, because her burning heart supplied heat from within. In the depth of winter she needed no material fire to keep off the cold, but even when the frost was so severe as to turn all the water into ice, she, wonderful to say, burned so in spirit that her body partook of the warmth of her soul, especially in time of prayer: so that sometimes she even perspired, and her clothes were scented with a sweet aromatic fragrance. Oftentimes also the smell of her clothes was like the smell of incense, while prayers were ascending from the thurible of her heart. What say you to this, ye women of vain and luxurious dress; you who dress up those corpses of yours with a great variety of ornaments, and with long and haughty trains, and

who, while you show yourselves to be of degenerate and grovelling souls, are adorned on the outside like a heathen temple? Your garments shall be eaten by moths, and shall stink; while the garments of this holy woman shall send forth a fragrant smell, and shall be kept as relics. These garments are precious, indeed, and thin as they were, were penetrated by no cold, but only became sanctified through the cold, and through their sanctification were preserved after her death, and are revered by the piety of the faithful.

OF HER MANUAL LABOUR.

This holy woman, moreover, did not forget that the Almighty had enjoined upon our first parents, and through them upon us, their children, a penance for their sin, saying, "In the sweat of thy brow shalt thou eat thy bread." Accordingly, she laboured with her hands as much as she could, that she might afflict her body with penance, that she might relieve the wants of her poor neighbours, and that, having left all to follow Christ, she might have wherewith to supply herself with food and clothing. And in this labour God had given her such strength, that she outstripped all her companions, and was able to support another as well as herself, while she diligently observed that precept of the apostle, where he says; He that laboureth not, neither

let him eat. Nor did she find the exercise of manual labour anything but most sweet, considering how the only-begotten Son of the Most High, He who opens His hand and fills every creature with blessing, was nourished and supported in poverty by the labour of St. Joseph, and of His Mother, the Blessed Virgin. In quiet then and in silence, according to the Apostolic command, she laboured with her hands and ate her bread; for her strength was in silence and in hope. So great, indeed, was her love of quiet and silence, and her dislike of noise and tumult, that sometimes she would observe silence from the feast of the Holy Cross to Easter Day, hardly uttering a word. And this silence of hers was so acceptable to the Lord, that it was revealed by the Holy Spirit, that it was for this, above all, that she was permitted to fly straight to heaven without any Purgatory. Thus it appears how great a fault talkativeness is, since silence is so pleasing to God, for indeed a man of many words shall not be directed in the land of the living. After a long time, however, when she had gone on multiplying by skilful traffic the talent committed to her, and ascending day by day on Jacob's ladder from one perfection to another, and so had at length reached a lofty height, and having gained the summit, had left, as it were, all sensible things beneath her feet; it happened that as her spirit mounted on high, all feelings of sense were so completely swallowed up in her, that now she could only labour for that food which perishes not, for Christ possessed her

wholly, and took up all her time. Thus she was as one who had gained a discharge through length of service. Though she was now freed from manual labour, yet for the future she only had leisure to attend to the things of the Lord; Christ having granted this liberty to His beloved handmaid.

OF HER EXTERIOR MODESTY AND SWEETNESS OF CONVERSATION.

Mary's interior peace of mind was shown by the gentleness of her exterior movements and gestures, and the serenity of her countenance betrayed the inward joy of her heart. Yet she tempered and restrained the cheerfulness of her heart with wonderful gravity, and in some measure concealed her mirthful feelings in the modest simplicity of her face. And as the Apostle directed that women should pray with their head covered, she made it a constant practice to wear a white veil, which covered her head, and hung down before her eyes. She walked slowly and deliberately, with her head humbly bent down, and her eyes looking on the ground. Yet the grace of the Holy Spirit so overflowed in her countenance from the plenitude of her heart, that many were spiritually refreshed, and moved to tears of devotion from merely beholding her. In her countenance, as in a book, they read the

grace and unction of the Holy Spirit, and felt virtue proceed from it. It happened one day, that a person of the name of Guido, one of a very benevolent disposition, and a great friend and lover of religious, who was formerly Cantor of the Church of Camera, turned out of his way in order to see her. One of his companions who had not, perchance, experienced the benefits which arise to pious persons from friendship and familiar intercourse with the good, laughed at the pious labour of the good man, and said to him: "In Heaven's name, Mr. Cantor, what are you going for? Why do you leave the road in this way for nothing? Are you going to imitate boys, and run after insects and butterflies?" He, however, being of a meek and patient disposition, did not give up his design because he was so spoken to, but devoutly visited the handmaid of Christ, from whose presence he had, on a former occasion, received no little consolation. In the meantime, his friend, like one who belonged to the world, making little account of such discourses, was employed in talking on various idle topics in another place. At last, tired with waiting, he came to the Cantor, that he might urge him to make haste. Directly, however, he turned his eyes towards the countenance of the saint, his heart was suddenly and wonderfully changed, and he broke out into such torrents of tears, that it was some time before he could move from the place where he was, and from her presence. Then the Cantor, though his modesty would otherwise have made him keep in the background, when he saw how things had

turned out, was full of joy, and, laughing in his turn, said goodnaturedly to his friend, "Come, let us be going; what do we stay here for? Perhaps you wish to chase the butterflies." The other, however, with many sighs and tears, could only with great difficulty be persuaded to come away. He humbly, however, asked pardon for what he had said, and confessed that he did not know what he was saying. "But now," he added, "I have myself experienced the power and grace of God in this holy woman."

It happened, however, to the saint that at length her poor weak frame could no longer bear the fervour of her soul, and she fell into a deplorable state of health. The benignant Father of all so chastened the daughter whom He loved with the scourge of discipline, that she suffered most severe torments in different parts of her body. Indeed, the agony she was in made her whirl her arms round and round in the air, and beat her breast with her hands. When, however, the force of the disease abated a little, returning to herself, she would with so much joy give thanks to God, who scourges every son whom He receives, that in her was fulfilled the saying of the Apostle, "When I am weak, then am I most strong." As soon, however, as our Lord had tried His elect with this infirmity, as the gold is tried in the fire, at length being perfectly purified and cleansed from all dross, she obtained from the Lord such strength for fasting, watching, and other spiritual exercises, that but few strong men could have endured the third part of what she went through. Yet some-

times when any one of her companions was suffering from any complaint, or was giving way under the force of any temptation, she, as being weak with the weak, endured through her sympathy with those who were offended, exceeding pain. At such times it was that she felt the attacks before mentioned with renewed violence in some one or other of her limbs. Upon this, she would send immediately for a priest, who would work a new kind of miracle by making the sign of the cross with his finger on the part affected, and the disease, as if fearing the virtue of the holy Cross, would immediately fly to another part of her body. The sign of the cross however having been made again and again, the wandering disease could at length endure its weight no longer, but was at last hunted out in this new and unheard-of way, and departed altogether from the body of the handmaid of our crucified Lord. Like God's people of old, when she was afflicted with the bite of the old serpent, she looked with the eye of faith upon the brazen serpent, and received relief. Whereupon she returned thanks to God, and to His Holy Cross.

But it was not only from the sight of her countenance that many received the grace of devotion, but in her conversation she poured forth such sweetness, that those who heard her experienced it not only spiritually in their heart, but even sensibly, like the taste of honey in their mouths. Those who are hard of heart and slow to believe, will doubtless carp and murmur at such things; but they who have themselves tasted such divine

consolations will readily assent to them. "Thy lips, O my beloved, are like a dropping honeycomb, milk and honey are under thy tongue." And so it happened, that when a certain person of great estimation, though he was little in his own sight, was talking to her one day, having out of his deep humility and ardent charity come from a very great distance for that purpose, he received such comfort and delight from seeing her, and so much sweetness from her conversation, that no flavour of material food could drive that honied taste out of his mouth for the whole of the day. The name of this holy person I designedly omit, because it would give him great pain to hear anything said in his own praise, and would be like trying gold in the furnace, to subject him to the torment of being praised and spoken well of. From this interview, however, it came to pass that the Comforter of afflicted souls consoled the bitterness of His exiled servant, since it was on His account that he was in exile. Why should your modesty be offended? Why should you be angry with me? I have not named you, I have only spoken of exile. Are there not many in exile as well as you? And many bishops of Toulouse before you, and may there not be many after you? Should the praises of the handmaid of Christ pass unnoticed for your modesty? What is it to you? What have you that you have not received? It is not your glory, but Christ's. Neither is he that planteth anything, nor he that watereth, but God, that giveth the increase. Do not, then, complain, since I have spoken not of

your glory but of God's. It was God who gave, it was you who received, and yet it was no less the handmaid of Christ, by whose merits God relieved the trials and the weight of your exile. But now it is time to bring to a close this First Book, in which I have described what had reference to the saint's outward life, and use of sensible things. Here, then, as having finished half our spiritual repast, let us rest for a few moments before passing to the more exquisite and refined food of her interior life.

BOOK II.

BOOK II.

CHAPTER I.

OF MARY'S FEAR OF GOD AND LOVE OF POVERTY.

Next, then, let us subjoin an account of how great was the glory of the King's daughter within, and with how great a variety of virtues and graces her soul was ornamented by the Father. Many daughters, indeed, have collected heavenly riches of this kind, even in our day, but she, as we believe, has surpassed them all. The garment of many colours which her Father gave to her was more glorious than that which the patriarch gave to his son, since it was wrought from top to bottom with every kind of virtue, and ornamented with every choice flower out of the garden of the Lord. Since, however, it would be impossible to recount all the stars of this splendid firmament, and all the flowers of this garden of Eden; to speak, in short, of all the virtues separately which she possessed, we will refer to the sources from which, as from a well-spring, all these were drawn, namely to the seven-fold gifts of the Holy Spirit. For the Lord replenished her with the spirit of wisdom and of understanding, the spirit of counsel and of fortitude, the spirit of knowledge and of godliness, and the spirit of the fear of the Lord. The spirit of wisdom made her abound

with sweetnesses and burn with charity; the spirit of understanding gave her the contemplation of the things of God; the spirit of counsel made her prudent; the spirit of fortitude made her patient and long-suffering. The spirit of knowledge rendered her discreet; the spirit of godliness made her abounding in compassion and mercy; while, lastly, the spirit of the fear of the Lord made the King's daughter cautious and humble.

First, then, let us consider her spirit of fear; for the fear of the Lord is not only the beginning of wisdom, but the keeper and guardian of all good things. And, although the perfect charity which the daughter of this great King possessed drove out all fear, that is to say, all painful and anxious fear, yet the very abundance of her charity gave her, on the other hand, a reverent and cautious fear. And this caution she observed so carefully, that not only in what she did, but in what she said also and thought, she did not neglect the least particular. She had often in her mind what is said in Scripture: He that neglecteth small things shall fall by little and little. She feared for everything that she did, keeping God always before her, and turning her thoughts to Him in all her ways, lest in anything she should displease Him. For she knew that though a man should avoid great dangers, yet that he may be overwhelmed with sand; and that as Absalom perished by hanging from the hairs of his head, so a multitude of wilful venial faults, which are despised and neglected, will lead to eter-

nal ruin. Chaste fear was, then, as a girdle round her loins, restraining evil thoughts. It was in her mouth as a bit to curb her tongue. In her deeds it acted as a goad to prevent her giving way to slothfulness. In all it was a rule to moderate her, and prevent excess. This fear of God was like a broom which purged her heart from duplicity, her mouth from what was false or idle, and her deeds from all vain glory. She herself was as a fenced garden, a sealed fountain, and received nothing into her heart easily, but Christ, and what belonged to Him. Christ was the meditation of her heart, the theme of her words, and the pattern of her actions. Not once do I remember to have heard any worldly discourse proceed out of her mouth. Hardly would she utter one sentence but she would bring in mention of her Lord, as it were, to season it. Indeed, the holy fear of God had so taken possession of her mind that when she was at Willambrock, near Nivelle, she had for her only food herbs which are not cultivated, but grow of their own accord, and which she had gathered for her use. For she feared lest she should eat of alms, such as those which usurers and extortioners provide for the hospitals of the leprous. Indeed, she made it a practice not only to refrain from all forbidden things, but to restrain herself even in the use of those which are allowed, lest by the use of too much liberty, she might in any way be led into what was wrong.

From this spirit of fear she also conceived a great love of poverty, so that she would scarcely retain the necessaries of life. Once, indeed, she

was going to set out for a foreign country, where being unknown, she might beg from door to door, and follow her Lord in nakedness and contempt; that she might be like Joseph, in quitting the cloak of all temporal things, or like the Samaritan woman, who left her water-pot, or St. John, who left his linen garment. Often did she meditate on the poverty of Christ, who was born in a stable, because there was no room in the inn, who had not a place to rest His head, who had not means to pay the tribute, and who chose to live on alms, and to be dependent on the hospitality of others. And at times she was so inflamed with the desire of poverty, that she provided herself with a bag in which to put the alms which she received, a small bowl to drink out of, or to put food in, when she had any given her, and clothed in old and tattered garments, she could scarcely be kept from her purpose by the prayers and entreaties of her friends. For when this poor handmaid of Christ had bid farewell to her friends and companions, and was just going to set out with her scrip and wooden bowl, and in the dress I have described, there arose such a weeping and wailing of her friends, who loved her in Christ, that she, abounding as she did in the bowels of compassion, could not resist it. Being, then, in a strait between two things, as she had so strong a desire to escape and follow Christ, begging her bread like Him, she yet determined to remain for the sake of her brothers and sisters in Christ, to whom her absence would be intolerable. What she could,

however, she failed not to do. She remained, but with such a love of poverty, that sometimes she would divide the very napkin off which she took her meals, and retaining half, give the rest to some poor person.

Woe, then, to you who join house to house, and add field to field, till there is no place left; who cannot be filled with money, nor can receive the benefit of it, who lay up for yourselves treasures upon the earth, where the rust and moth consume, and where thieves break through and steal, always heaping together, yet ever wasting away in want! What did this poor handmaid of Christ ever stand in need of, who, though she fled from riches, yet had always wherewith to bestow on others? She always loved poverty, and Christ always supplied her necessities so much the more abundantly. Nor did she only despise riches through the spirit of fear, but she had so much of the spirit of poverty in her, that she was ever little in her own eyes. So great was her humility, that she accounted herself as nothing, and having done all things well, she not only acknowledged with her mouth that she was an unprofitable servant, but what is more, she felt it in her heart. She esteemed herself inferior to all, and never presumed on herself, but looked up to all as her superiors. When God granted her any favour, she referred it to the merits of others; nor did she ever seek her own glory, but referred everything to Him from whom all good things proceed. She judged herself most unworthy of the benefits

conferred on her, and never despised any one else but herself, however weak or sinful he might be. She made no account of being despised by others, of evil report or good report, but felt herself secure in being girt about with truth. As she was in the sunshine, so was she when under a cloud; she was neither depressed by dispraise, nor yet elevated by her own commendation.

Moreover, out of her superabundant humility, she always desired, where it was possible, to be concealed and in obscurity; accordingly, when her heart so overflowed with joy and with a superabundant gift of grace, that she could not restrain herself, she would betake herself to the neighbouring woods and groves, that there avoiding human observation, she might preserve her secret in the ark of a pure conscience. Sometimes, however, when she was driven to it by the entreaties of her companions, or sent specially by God to any one, or moved by compassion to console the pusillanimous, she would mention with great humility and modesty some of the many things she experienced. How often did she say to her friends, "Why do you ask me? I am not worthy to feel such things as you ask me about." Often did she answer to the Lord as if complaining, "Lord, what are these things to me? Send, Lord, whom thou wilt send, I am not worthy to go nor to declare thy counsels to others." Yet the Holy Spirit so drove her on, that she could not help doing good to her neighbour sometimes, by communicating His inspirations. From how many families did she not

in this way ward off danger? How often did she not discover the hidden snares of evil spirits, which were laid against her companions? How often did she strengthen the weak-hearted and wavering in faith by miraculous revelations? How often, again, did she admonish persons not to carry into execution projects which as yet they had but conceived in their minds, or relieve those who were on the brink of ruin and almost desperate, by the light of divine revelations?

Why do you blush so timidly, and hoard up in so miserly a way the spiritual goods which you possess, and which others are in need of, O most blessed saint? Why through the excess of humility do you withdraw yourself from edifying your neighbour? Was it for your sake, who were already united, as it were, inseparably to God, and needed not the help of such revelations, that He vouchsafed such great and frequent ones to you? Was it not rather for their benefit who trusted in you and required your support? Alas! how many things have you kept secret by which the weak might have been strengthened, and the slothful awakened, and the unlearned enlightened, and the wonderful works of the Lord in His saints have been shewn forth! Why, then, dost thou hide thy talent? Why dost thou not show forth Christ to the world? He would not be less present in you, even though others should share Him with you. Did it not sometimes happen, when the Lord brought you into his wine-cellar, and you were inebriated with His love, that you exclaimed, "Lord, why dost Thou hide

Thyself? Why dost Thou not show Thyself as Thou art? For in truth if the world knew Thee, for the time to come it would not commit sin, but would run straightway after the odour of Thy sweet ointment." But blessed be God, who by this liberality to us rendered your parsimony of no avail, and revealed your hiding-place, whether you were willing or not. For when the new wine of fervour, which inflamed your spirit, was seeking to escape, and the intolerable fire which burned within your soul, required some relief, then at last the truth was extorted from your pure heart, inebriated with the wine of heavenly love. Then it was that you uttered from your abundance things wonderful and unheard of, and turned, as it were, from a disciple to be the mistress. You read to us out of the Book of Life many beautiful lessons, if only we had the strength to receive them. And when at last, like a mighty man overcome with wine, you had slept and awakened, and come to yourself, you either kept silence, having no remembrance of what you had said; or if by chance you called anything to mind, you were overcome by modesty and confusion, and declared yourself a talkative and silly person, and wondering at what had happened, you asked pardon of God for what you had done.

Once we asked whether she never felt any the least risings of vain glory at the praises of men and divine revelations, which were heaped upon her in such abundance. "In comparison," she said, "of the true glory which I desire, all human boast-

ing is as nothing." And, indeed, she herself was so grounded in truth, so firmly and immovably fixed on her Lord, and so replenished with all true goods, and spiritual delights, that she was as one who, being surrounded with all kinds of dainty and luxurious dishes, has one ill-seasoned and tasteless one presented to him, which he at once rejects without wishing to taste it. Thus it was with her. All worldly glory, and empty praise of men she not only gave no place to, but through the sweetness of the good things of eternity, even rejected it with loathing. For as Christ cannot be sweet to his taste to whom the world is sweet, so the sweetness of Christ had so taken up her whole heart and soul, that now she could relish nothing else.

CHAPTER II.

OF HER PIETY AND ZEAL IN WORKS OF MERCY.

Nor did Mary only guard against all appearance of evil through the spirit of fear which she possessed in so eminent a degree, but the spirit of piety made her also ready and eager for every good work. Bodily exercises she considered as of little worth in comparison of piety, which, according to the words of the apostle, is profitable for all things, having the promise of the present life and of that which is to come. She kept the fire of charity continually burning in the lamp of her heart, replenishing it with the oil of compassion, lest perchance she should be found like one of the foolish

virgins, without any oil in her vessel, and so should be rejected from the joyful marriage-feast of heaven. She sought, therefore, eagerly and to the utmost of her power to perform out of the fulness of her heart every kind of charitable work. Above all, however, it was her custom to attend the sick, and to be present at the last moments of the dying and the burial of the dead ; and on these occasions she most frequently participated in heavenly mysteries which God revealed to her. On a certain day a sister of the Friars of Oignies was in the agonies of death ; she, while in her cell, perceived in spirit a multitude of howling demons round the bed of the sick person, just at the moment that a commendation was being made of her departing soul. Immediately, as if she had entirely forgot her usual sober and modest demeanour, she ran to the bedside of the sick person, and opposing herself to the foul spirits, she not only wrestled with them in prayer, but drove them away with her cloak as she would have done flies. The impious spirits, however, resisted vigorously, and attempted to claim and take possession of the soul of the sister as their own. Upon which she could restrain herself no longer, but called upon Christ our Lord, beseeching Him incessantly by the precious blood which He poured forth for the salvation of souls, and by His death upon the cross. But when the howling demons, intent on devouring their prey, attacked that soul with many false accusations, she becoming bold and confident in the strength of the Holy Spirit (for where the spirit of God is there is liberty), answered, "Lord, I stand

responsible for this soul; for though she has committed sins, yet she has confessed them. And if anything through negligence or ignorance still has place within her, although she has now no longer power to confess it in words, yet Thou hast still left her time for contrition." In the meantime the brethren who were witnesses of her words and gestures against the evil spirits, continued to make most earnest prayers for the soul of their sister, so that at length the devils were confounded and overcome, and the holy angels came to the assistance of the sick person. Whereupon the saint returned thanks to God, and coming to herself again she picked up her cloak, which she had cast from her in the heat of the conflict; and returning hastily and modestly to her cell, she shut herself up in retirement.

No long time after, on the feast of the blessed apostles Peter and Paul, as she was praying for the soul of her for whom she had made herself responsible, and was anxiously desirous to ascertain her state, the blessed Peter was pleased to let her see in vision the soul she was praying for violently tormented in the fire of purgatory. Moreover, the holy apostle revealed to her both the nature of her pains and the causes of them. She was tormented with fire because she had loved the world and its pleasures too ardently. Sometimes she suffered extreme cold as a punishment for being slothful in all good works, and more especially because she had been negligent in correcting her sons and the other members of her family. For being somewhat given to drink during

her lifetime, she suffered the torment of excessive thirst, and for indulging in vain and superfluous dress, she endured the greatest inconvenience from want of clothing. Then the pious handmaid of Christ, who was all pity and compassion, and especially for those who were suffering in purgatory, made many and earnest supplications for her, and not content with these, obtained many masses and prayers to be said for her by others.

On another occasion, when a certain religious, who had long served God in holy widowhood, and had brought up her daughters in holy virginity, as chaste spouses of the heavenly Bridegroom, was in the last agonies of death, at Willambrock, near Nivelle, Mary saw the Blessed Virgin assisting the holy widow, and fanning her as it were, to cool the burning heat with which she was tormented. And when, at last, her soul was ready to depart out of her body, a crowd of malignant spirits lay in wait for her, and no prayers, however earnest, could move them, until he who has the keys of the kingdom of heaven drove them away with the standard of the cross. After the decease of this holy widow the handmaid of Christ saw the Blessed Virgin, accompanied by a great number of heavenly virgins who were singing and praising God near the body, divided into two bands. And when the priest came to fulfil the last rites of the church over the body in the usual way, the great High Priest, together with a multitude of saints, seemed, as she thought, to fill up the spaces of the office for the dead with the proper answers. It was as if the Church triumphant made the responses to the Church

militant. Lastly, when her body was committed to the earth, the saint saw her soul, which had not in this world been fully purified, complete what she had to suffer in purgatory. For her husband had been a merchant, and had, after the custom of such people, obtained some gain in a fraudulent way. Moreover, she had entertained in her house some of the family of the Duke of Louvain, who spent in her house a good deal of money which they had acquired unjustly; and as she had not fully made restitution for this, she said that on this account she was still detained in purgatory. As soon, however, as this became known to her daughter Margaret, of Willambrock, who was a most holy virgin, both she and her sisters obtained many prayers to be said in behalf of her mother, and made restitution to the utmost of their power. And so it was that not long after, the soul of this widow appeared to the handmaid of Christ, more clear than glass, whiter than snow, and more resplendent than the sun. For now she was at last ascending to the eternal marriage feast of the Lamb, and as she went she returned thanks for her blessed release, and holding in her hand, as it appeared, the Book of Life, she reigned the scholar of her Divine Master.

When, again, a certain holy and blessed old man, John of Dinant, surnamed the Gardener, who had persevered in virginal innocence from his childhood, and who, for Christ's sake, had left all, and by his own example, as well as by his holy counsel, had brought many souls to God; when

he, I say, was approaching his end, the saint was there and rendered her assistance. While she was there she saw a great multitude of angels assisting the old man, and rejoicing. And she also perceived a wonderfully sweet odour, so that through the excess of her joy she could not contain herself. For, indeed, she loved him exceedingly, and looked upon him as her father. On this occasion, then, it was revealed to her by the Holy Spirit, that since this old man had done so much penance while yet in the flesh, and had patiently sustained so many persecutions and reproaches for Christ's sake, had lived so holily and carefully, and moreover had gained so many souls to Christ, that he was freed from all the pain of purgatory, and would fly straight to the presence of his Lord. Ever after this, as often as she passed by his tomb, which is not far from Oignies, she made a lowly reverence to it. And when, in course of time, her own soul was in its last extremity, the spirit of the holy old man, with a certain friend of his, also departed this life, namely, brother Richard of Manechan-capella, was sent by God to visit and console her. But, above all, throughout her life the handmaid of Christ was full of compassion and pity for the sick and infirm, and not unfrequently passed sleepless nights on their account. At another time, the Mother of the Brethren of Oignies was labouring under a very severe and protracted illness. Mary went occasionally to see her, and to console and assist her. She was an old woman of nearly a hundred years, and inasmuch as she was near death, her breath

was very corrupt. During one night, it was so bad that the saint could hardly bear it, and not at all without great pain. Yet doing violence to herself, she remained assisting her. And when, at length, she could do so no longer, and was near fainting, the Lord regarded the humility of his handmaid, and sent her a strong taste, as it were, of some precious aromatic wine, and a sweet smell, as it were, of burning incense, which lasted for about three days. And so strong was it that no taste of any food could drive away this aromatic scent and flavour.

Nor was it consolation only, and patience which the Lord granted to the sick, by her presence; but often he was pleased to restore many to health by the efficacy of her merits. Some children were brought to her who had been ruptured, but no sooner did she lay her hands on them, than they were healed. Near Oignies there was a boy who suffered from a dangerous complaint, for he had a continual flow of blood from his head through his ear, and no human art or medicine was of any avail to cure him, until by the medicine of her prayers, and the imposition of her hands, he was restored to perfect health. The boy's mother brought him to the church, and returned thanks to God and to His handmaid, for the cure. A certain woman, too, who laboured under a very dangerous disease, namely, an imposthume in the throat, was restored to health by her touch. Again, a cleric of the name of Lambert, who lay sick at Oignies, was cured of the same disease by her touch. A priest of Nivelle, named

Guerricus, told me that when he was suffering from a very dangerous illness, and all the physicians despaired of his recovery, and thought that he was past hope, he came to the saint, and obtained, with many prayers, that she should lay her hands on him. The same night it seemed to him that, as he slept, the Blessed Virgin came to him, and after this he was restored to health. Another priest also, a most humble and devout man, and her spiritual father, one Master Guido, of Nivelle, was perfectly cured of a dangerous swelling he had in his throat, as soon as the handmaid of Christ had touched him with her hand. And another person, whose infirmity was considered quite a hopeless one, and who had in vain been attended by a number of physicians, and now had nothing to look for but death, by just touching the hair of her head was made quite well.

But why should I spend my time over these trifling matters, when there are so many great and wonderful ones yet untold? For though it is a pious and charitable work to relieve bodily sickness, yet it is incomparably greater to spend time and labour on the cure of souls; nor is there any sacrifice more well-pleasing to God than a zeal for saving souls. Mary, then, was always cheerful and in good spirits, except when the danger or fall of her neighbour, darkened and clouded her mind. In this case alone, (may she forgive me for saying so), she passed the bounds of moderation; she mourned in the greatest anxiety, she was then in pain and desolation, she would not take food, she drove sleep

from her eyes, and sometimes she cried out like one in the pains of labour. With what grief then was she not wounded, when the evil spirits, howling and gnashing their teeth, came down in a body on a congregation of holy virgins, in a little village called Manni, where they served God devoutly. And when, at last, as if having gained their object, she saw the impious and malicious demons begin to dance with joy at their success in the expulsion of these holy women, she cried out and lamented piteously, and could hardly bear the sorrow which she endured.

Another day she saw a great army of wicked spirits, returning with a great deal of noise and pomp from the destruction and sack of the city of Liège, and glutted as it were with blood. And not satisfied with this they were threatening yet farther mischief. Not long after, accordingly, news came to Oignies, that the city of Liège was destroyed; that the churches had been despoiled, the women violated and the men slain; nay, that the enemy had carried off all the goods of the city. There was then at Oignies a holy man of very edifying conversation, who was held in very high estimation even by bad men. Indeed, Master John of Nivelle, for such was his name, was a light of the whole Church, both as a Doctor and Spiritual Father. He, when he heard these miserable reports, was overwhelmed with grief and astonishment, most especially on account of the holy virgins whom he himself had gained to the Lord by his preaching and example. And in his paternal solicitude he

feared lest, as some untruly reported, any of these had been violated. For the loss of the temporal goods he cared little, since these he counted but as chaff and dung; but the destruction of the churches, and the loss of souls, this holy man, who was adorned with most special graces and virtues, grieved for inconsolably. As a father he grieved for those whom he considered his sons; as a patron he bewailed the destruction of the churches; and as a friend of the Bridegroom, he lamented for these virgins whom he had betrothed to be presented as chaste spouses to Christ. The handmaid of Christ, however, when she was told these rumours, was little disturbed by them, so that those who knew how much she loved the chaste virgins of Liège, marvelled not a little. For, indeed, she had been prepared and guarded beforehand by our Lord, as He, like a tender Father, knew, that unless she was forewarned, she would be overwhelmed with excessive grief. And when the friars of Oignies, like most clerics, were in great fear and anxiety, because it was said that the enemy was coming into those parts; she alone out of all remained undisturbed, the holy angels consoling her interiorly, and men of good will bringing words of peace to her on earth. About the religious house at Oignies she felt great peace and calm, being convinced in spirit, both of the security of her own friends, and of the inviolate purity of the holy virgins. Yet she felt as if the earth trembled, and complained that it was sustaining men,

who, by such exceeding wickedness, were putting themselves in opposition to their Maker.

It happened at a certain time, that a soldier, of the name of Ywanus, of Zoania, a man of noble birth and great valour, but given up to the vanities of the world, was moved by the grace of God, and, being assisted by the prayers and counsel of the saint, left the world and was converted to God. Thereupon, the wicked spirit, full of fury and confusion, appeared to her in the shape of a monstrous dog, and with threatening gestures, said to her: "You impudent and hateful one, it is through you that I have received so great a loss. It is you who have deprived me of one of my special adherents." Afterwards, when this soldier had been persevering for some time in his good purpose, it happened that he was dining one day with an old host of his, who was also his creditor. This person was a rich citizen of Nivelle, who had often entertained him when he was as yet in the world, and in whose house he had lived very freely and self-indulgently, and like most soldiers, spent a great deal of money in this way. And being under obligation to him on account of the debts he still owed him, he could not altogether avoid him. As then this friend of his was putting all sorts of luxurious dishes before him, and they were feasting with great splendour; the wicked spirit judging this to be a fit time for temptation, brought every means of attack against the citadel, if by any chance he might prevail. He craftily reminded him of the onions and flesh-pots of Egypt, bringing before him all the glory and

pleasure which he had had in the world. He was already beginning to waver in his mind, and satan was sifting him as wheat, when the merciful Lover of souls, who suffers no one to be tempted above that which he is able, who extinguishes not the smoking flax, nor bruises the broken reed, made known in spirit to His handmaid, how that soldier was wavering in his weakness, because he had not avoided the company of worldlings. Accordingly, as he was still sitting at the table, and deliberating in himself with an uncertain mind, a messenger from the saint came suddenly, and waiting at the door, took an opportunity to speak to him privately, telling him that his mistress desired to speak to him directly. When he had come to the place where that precious pearl of Christ was waiting outside the town of Nivelle, he found her pining and languishing through grief and anxiety of heart, and watering the feet of her crucifix, which she was embracing, with a flood of tears. Wondering at what he saw, and covered with confusion, he asked why she was lamenting and grieving in that way. "With great reason do I mourn and lament," she replied, "and that too on your account. I am disturbed on account of your unhappy condition, who, having begun in the spirit, are ending with the flesh, and miserably suffering yourself to be consumed by its desires. You have put your hand to the plough, and are now looking back like Lot's wife, unmindful of, and ungrateful for His kindness and superabundant mercy, who, when others are perishing in

the flames of this world, has delivered you out of them." Upon this, struck with compunction at the wonderful revelation, and returning to himself, he exclaimed, "Pardon me, my holy mother, and pray for me, miserable sinner that I am, and I promise to God and to you that for the time to come I will remain stedfast in His service, who has recalled me so wonderfully by your means." Since, however, the world had still some hold on him, because he was mixed up in so much worldly business, he was compelled to attend frequently on the courts of noblemen, where his former companions and relations and friends, looking upon him as one who was dead, pointed at him with their finger as something strange and curious, some deriding him, some soothing him with soft speeches, while others endeavoured to break his spirit, or to enrage him by reproaches or injuries. Some again of these satellites of Satan even went so far as to pull him about by his cloak or hood, though he was a nobleman, and little accustomed to such usage. But he opposed them, and defended himself with the shield of patience, though he was now and then, through the infirmity of human nature, a little put out by it. On such occasions, when he returned to himself, like a lamb snatched from the jaws of a wolf, he had recourse for comfort after such a shipwreck to his spiritual mother. And she, being divinely inspired, related to the soldier of Christ all the insults which had been heaped upon him, and all the mockeries and reproaches with which those who had mocked Christ had outraged him, and

even the very hour at which he had begun to be somewhat vexed. All this did she tell him by the spirit of prophecy. "Alas!" she would say, "at such an hour you needed assistance, and at that hour I was offering prayers to our gracious Lord in your behalf, that He would grant you after His example to look down upon the good things of earth, and to fear none of its hardships or temptations." And so comforted was he by this miracle, and by the consolation he received from the handmaid of Christ, that he became like a house founded on a rock, which neither wind nor rain could overturn. Often was he assailed, to make him fall, but the Lord, through the merits of his handmaid, upheld him, that he might not slip.

Again, at Willambrock she saw some evil spirits, by a crafty contrivance, preparing a secret snare to catch some of her friends, whose fall might cause the greatest scandal to the simple-minded. But she, when she saw the enemy bend his bow that he might wound in the dark those that were true of heart, was not contented any longer with tears or prayers, but began to fast. For she knew that this kind of evil spirit was not easily cast out but by prayer and fasting. When she had now for forty days humbled her soul with prayer and fasting, at length the Lord had compassion on His handmaid, and not suffering her to fast any longer, He revealed to her that by her merits she had liberated the soul of her friend, and showed her into what a pitfall of sin he would have fallen, unless the enemy had been overcome by

her prayers and fasts. Alas! for us who have lost so great a comfort in our miseries, and so great a protection in tribulation and temptation, unless God shall restore to us in heaven what has been taken away from us in this exile.

But if the earnestness of her prayers was an efficacious remedy against all sorts of mental and spiritual disorder, it was so above all against blasphemy and despair. And as that evil spirit is most powerful which makes these assaults, so was she most powerful in affording aid and support to those who were suffering from them.

There was a certain monk of the Cistercian Order who had such an ardent desire after innocence and purity, though not according to knowledge, that he strove in his fervour to attain to the state of our first parents. When he had laboured a long time, afflicting his body to no purpose with abstinence and watchings, with prayers and tears, and yet was unable to recover the state of lost innocence, first of all he fell into distaste for spiritual things, and into slothfulness. He wished to take food, and yet to receive no sensible pleasure while he ate. He endeavoured not only to repress the very first motions of the flesh, but to extinguish them utterly. And he desired to preserve his life so pure and perfect, as to be without even any venial fault. But since, at the instigation of the evil noonday devil, he was aiming at what was beyond his power, so that he could never possibly attain to it by any labour and trouble, he naturally fell into the pitfall of despair through melancholy. For in the state of

corruption in which he believed himself to be, he could not hope to obtain salvation, since he thought that all those venial faults, from which we cannot altogether free ourselves, were so many mortal sins. Hence he would not receive the Lord's body, even on the days prescribed by the rule. Behold to what a miserable and ruinous state the old enemy of mankind had brought this simple-minded man under an appearance of good. Sick as he was, he refused all medicine, and though he had by his very profession renounced his own will, yet he put from him the yoke of obedience.

There is a story, which, though fictitious in itself, has a very true and real application, of a certain frog, who, seeing an ox of great strength, and of a fair size, was seized with a desire to be like it, and to swell itself out to an equal bulk. It began accordingly to blow itself out, and used every effort to make itself as big as possible, but all in vain, as it would never have attained to such a size, if it had blown itself till it burst. And to nothing else can I compare that monk who desired to be like our first parents. In his attempts to rise above his condition, he only fell lower down into despair. When a certain Abbot, who was a holy man, and a lover of all good people, came to know the disease of his soul, he, together with many others, offered prayers to God for him, but without effect. The enemy was suffered to prevail, and having caught him in his meshes, continued to torment him. Then the abbot, who was a friend of the holy woman, whom

we are writing about, and who was well acquainted with her power, which indeed he had himself experienced, had the monk brought to the saint. She having supplicated God in his behalf with many tears and sighs, it fell out that as the monk was saying the Confiteor before the Introit at mass, and she meanwhile was praying most earnestly for him, it appeared as if black pebbles fell from the mouth of the monk at each word. At this the handmaid of Christ returned thanks to Him who desires not the death of a sinner, but rather that he should be converted and live; for she perceived that the obstinacy of despair and the blackness of sadness and sorrow had now left the monk. While he, as if he had returned to himself, after a long journey, received the Body of Christ at the end of Mass, and having received this life-giving food, was perfectly restored.

CHAPTER III.

OF THE SPIRIT OF WISDOM WHICH MARY POSSESSED.

Since no little caution and circumspection is necessary, both in avoiding all evil by the spirit of fear, and in the exercise of all good works by the spirit of piety, the Father of lights, whose heavenly unction teaches us all things, enlightened His handmaid with the spirit of wisdom; by which she knew both what was to be done and what was to be avoided, and in what manner, so that she seasoned every sacrifice with the salt of knowledge. For, indeed, evil is next to good, and it

often happens that while we avoid one fault we fall into the contrary. Thus when a man avoids superfluities and extravagance he often falls into covetousness; or when he has learnt to abstain from all vain ornament in dress, he comes to glory in his dirt and rags. And vice not unfrequently bears the semblance of virtue, so as more completely to deceive those who follow after it, because it hides itself under the garb of what is good. Thus, again, cruelty is often exercised under the pretext of justice; indolence is looked upon as gentleness of disposition, and what is commonly supposed to be the effect of self-indulgence, often results in negligence of the body. She, however, of whom we write, declined neither to the right hand nor to the left, but pursued her own middle course of a virtuous and holy life, with wonderful evenness and moderation. She both rendered to God what was due to Him, and preserved, as much as lay in her power, peace with her neighbour. She was at peace not only with the peaceable, but with those likewise who hated peace. She lived prudently with men of an evil generation, and became all things to all men, that she might gain all to God. Two of her brethren according to the flesh, as well as some others, though before given up to the world, inspired by God's grace. and assisted by her prudent counsels, left all they had and gave themselves up to the Cistercian order.

Sometimes, when her soul was united to God in a most sweet and delightful manner by the spirit of fear, we brought her word that certain persons who had come from a great distance, and

were in a hurry to return, were waiting to see her. For though in the words of Scripture, the Lord had adjured us by the wild goats and the harts of the field, that we should not waken or disturb His beloved, until she desired it, yet as she never desired it, but thirsted ever to repose with her Lord in the noonday, we sometimes made bold to awaken her. She, however, when she heard of the arrival of the strangers, lest she should perchance offend any one, did violence to herself, and forced herself from her sweet contemplation, and from the embraces of her Spouse. But it was with such grief and pain of spirit that, as it were, her bowels were torn by the effort, and she spit, or rather vomited, pure blood. Yet she preferred even this martyrdom to disturbing the peace of her brethren, especially those who had come from a distance. At another time, however, when the Holy Spirit revealed to her that some persons were coming who were as yet at a great distance, she fled to the neighbouring woods in the country, and there hid herself, so that we could scarce find her in the course of a day. At times, however, when the good of others required it, she was compelled to awaken from her sleep by no other suggestion than that of the Holy Spirit, who whispered in her ear: "Go, for some one calls thee, not from curiosity, but for good reason." And though she preserved peace with wonderful discretion towards others, not only those who were good, but likewise the ill-tempered and peevish, yet towards herself she always seemed

to us to be rather hard and severe, always casting reproach on herself, and afflicting herself in every way. Yet, for all that seemed to the contrary, she was in reality by so much the more prudent and careful concerning herself, inasmuch as she never ventured to do anything about herself but what she was prompted to by the suggestion of the Holy Spirit. She did not presume even to pass a single day without food, unless she found herself so wrapped in heavenly contemplation as to be quite dead to all sensible things. Once or twice she endeavoured, for the sake of those who were with her, that they might not be offended, to take some food while she was in this state, but she could not manage to take anything, and nearly fainted with pain.

Hence, indeed, she obtained, as it were, a sort of prerogative of liberty, so that no one dared to say, "Why do you do so?" for her manner of life was above human reasoning or calculation. She was by a sort of privilege left to God and herself. She judged all things, but was herself judged by none. Often did the Holy Spirit guide her in omitting or doing things which could not be understood by human reason. Thus, when she was accustomed for some time to take food three times a week, she used to eat on Friday, but not on Sunday, and so nothing again on Thursday. It seemed to us more reasonable that she should abstain from all food on Friday, seeing it is a day of penance, and, moreover, that on which our Lord died for us; while Thursday and the Lord's Day seemed to us

much more reasonable and proper days for eating. When, accordingly, I urged this to her, she answered: that since she interrupted the felicity of contemplation by eating, she could not attend to her bodily wants without pain and annoyance. On Thursday, then, the day of the Holy Spirit, and on Sunday, because of the joy of the Resurrection, "I keep holiday," she said, "and find satisfaction enough in the spiritual refreshment which I am provided with in heavenly banquets, and am not obliged to descend to objects of sense for the sake of bodily food." Having heard this, I held my peace, and never again ventured to open my mouth against anything she did. I perceived that my calculations were too short to measure her actions by, and was humbled in my own eyes. For wisdom is justified by her children.

As for great sinners, and persons of irregular life, though she did not indignantly reject them, but rather, through her compassion for them, prudently admonished them, and thus brought back many from the way of destruction; yet she detested most heartily, and from the bottom of her soul, all the sins of men, and all friendship or intimacy with wicked persons: never presumptuously confiding in her own strength or virtue. Evil communications, she knew, corrupt good manners, and the Lord commanded His disciples, when they entered into any city, to see if there were any persons under whose hospitality they might securely and honestly remain. It happened once, that when she was living at

Oignies, she had occasion to go to Willambrock to see some friends of hers, and as she was returning through the midst of Nivelle, she called to mind the sins and abominations which persons in the world often commit there. And the thought of this excited such indignation and disgust in her mind, that she began to cry out from the pain which she felt; and when they had passed out of the town, asking her maid for a knife, she would have cut off the skin from the soles of her feet, because they had trodden on the ground where so many things were done by miserable men to provoke God, and exasperate their Creator against them by their crimes and injuries. And as she was not only pained internally in her mind, but what is more wonderful, felt a sensible pain in her feet, which had trodden such places; she could scarce be satisfied with striking them several times violently against the ground.

This wise and prudent woman was well versed also in the Holy Scriptures. For she frequently used to attend the churches in order to hear sermons, and the words which she there heard, she treasured up in her heart. And as we are told that there is a good understanding to all that do what they know, so Mary was not only devout in learning the will of God, but still more so in doing it. Even in her last illness, when all strength was failing her at the near approach of death, yet, upon some one's making a sermon in the church to the people, her spirit was revived by the word of God; death could not prevent her from listening with her ears and preparing her heart, and

she even repeated some passages out of the sermon to those who stood by. She had, too, such a love for all preachers as well as faithful pastors, that, after preaching, she would seize them by the feet, which she kissed with wonderful affection, even against their wish and consent, and if they withdrew themselves she would cry out with mortification. So earnest was she in the work of preaching, that since she could not exercise that office herself, she obtained from God, with many sighs and tears, and fasts and earnest prayers, that He would grant her the merit and office of preaching in the person of some one else. She desired that, as a great boon, God would give her a preacher. And her request having been granted, though God made use of him as an instrument to utter the words, yet it was according to the prayers of the saint that the Lord prepared his heart, and gave him strength and supplied him words, and directed his course, and by the merits of His handmaid vouchsafed grace and fruit in the hearers. And as Martin used to pray for Hilary when he was preaching, so used she every day to supplicate our Lord and the Blessed Virgin by saying a hundred Aves for him when he preached. And as our Lord, when He loved His own, loved them to the end, so she commended her preacher to God most devoutly, when she was on her death-bed.

One day, when she was in a garden near Willambrock, the devil appeared to her under the form of a shepherd. For the impious spirit had at that time collected a great many soldiers, who

were to be at a tournament next day, at a village called Trasegnies, and they were lodging that night at Nivelle. When, accordingly, the wicked spirit, vaunted, in his disguise, that he was a shepherd, she replied: "You are not a shepherd, but they are true shepherds, who, like those set over us, preach the word of God, and feed our souls faithfully." "I," said that wicked and proud spirit, "have more flocks, and in greater subjection to me, than those masters of yours, for I know them, and they follow me, and hear my voice, and follow me according to my will." At length, when she heard the evil spirit, who leads his goats through the pastures of worldly vanity, to the pastures of eternal damnation, where death will feed miserably on them, usurp the title of shepherd; she could endure it no longer, but full of compassion for his unhappy victims, she groaned and left the wicked spirit, and fled to the Church. Nor could she for a long time after refrain from tears whenever she thought of that miserable shepherd.

Yet, though Mary was taught by the grace of the Holy Spirit, and by divine revelations which instructed her from within, yet she was not the less eager to hear and learn the Scriptures, which were in perfect harmony with the motions of the Blessed Spirit. For though the Lord could have instructed His disciples by interior illuminations, without any external voice, yet He chose to use this instrument, and to unfold to them the Scriptures; nay, He even said to them, "Now are ye clean through the word I have

spoken to you." Day by day then did the saint grow in the knowledge of the Scriptures; by them she was cleansed and purified more and more; by them her character was strengthened and adorned; and by them was her faith enlightened and increased. Though, indeed, in her case it could hardly be called faith, since God was pleased to reveal the invisible things of faith to her very sight. Once, for instance, when she was at a village called Itere, near Nivelle, and a boy was being catechised at the church door, in her presence, she actually saw the foul spirit retiring in great confusion. And again, when they were withdrawing him from the holy font, her eyes were opened, and she saw the Holy Spirit coming down into his soul, and a great number of holy angels round the new-born Christian. Often, too, when the priest elevated the Host, she saw in his hands, as it were, a most beautiful infant, and a numerous band of celestial spirits coming down from heaven, encircled with a bright light. And then, when the priest, at the communion, received the Sacred Host, she saw in spirit our Lord, dwelling in his soul, and making it marvellously clear and light. Or if, on the other hand, the priest received unworthily, she saw our Lord indignantly retiring and leaving the soul of the unhappy man, dark and empty. And although she was not in the church at all, but praying in her cell, with her eyes covered as usual with a white veil, yet, when Christ descended on the altar, at the words of consecration, she by a wonderful interior change,

was made sensible of His coming. When, too, some sick persons received the Sacrament of Extreme Unction, and she was in the room, she was sensibly conscious of her Lord's presence, together with a great number of saints; and she saw Him, when He was come, compassionately strengthen the sick man and purify his soul, driving away all evil spirits, and transfuse Himself, like a ray of light, through his whole body, as the different members were anointed.

CHAPTER III.

OF THE SPIRIT OF FORTITUDE WITH WHICH SHE WAS ARMED.

But since it is of small advantage to shun evil by the spirit of fear, or to practise what is good by the spirit of piety, or even to exercise prudence and discretion by the spirit of wisdom, unless we resist all evils that threaten us by the spirit of fortitude, unless we keep the good we have attained by patience, and unless we persevere to the end with constancy, and with longanimity wait for our eternal reward in heaven; her heavenly Father opened His treasures, and presented His daughter with a fourth jewel of great price, namely, the spirit of fortitude, by which He strengthened her against all adversities; so that by the virtue of this heavenly grace, she might be neither confused by calamity, nor elevated by the favours of fortune; that she might

endure reproach and contumely with equanimity, and never return evil for evil, but, on the contrary, meet cursing by blessing, and wickedness with goodness. She returned good for evil, she made no answer to those who persecuted her, and prayed for her calumniators. She had so much constancy that she always persevered in her undertakings; by her firmness she went through everything with equanimity, and her greatness of soul made her undertake the most difficult and arduous things of her own accord. Nor had she had any apprehension of those inconveniences and obstacles which generally accompany such undertakings. Her confidence in God gave her a certain hope of bringing her good design to a happy conclusion, and by her greatness of soul she brought to a successful termination her great and holy undertakings.

Moreover, Mary had not only great patience under the scourge of persecution, but she even took pleasure in tribulations, and received God's chastening with eagerness. In her last illness, when she had been lying in great pain and uneasiness for about forty days, we asked her whether the torment of her complaint did not make her feel wearied. "No," she said, "If it were God's will I would begin this forty days again;" and she added, what seemed to us still more wonderful, that she had never seen any one suffering under ever so great an infirmity or disease, but what she had desired to bear it for him. Woe, then, to you who bear the cross of Christ impatiently, and by compulsion, who

cast away the discipline of the Lord, who, like furious and raging dogs, bite at the rod of the Master who strikes you, and murmur at His chastisements; and who do but double the bodily pain you feel by the impatience of your heart! This precious pearl of Christ, on the contrary, by the joy with which she received trials and afflictions, suffered them as it were without feeling them, or rather felt a sweet pleasure in them; for, indeed, the pleasure she felt internally softened the pain she felt from without, lightening and soothing the weight of her trials and infirmities. Once it happened that she was driven by the violence of the pain and of her convulsions, to cry out and beat her breast, through the extremity she was in. A friend and companion of hers, who was concealed in a secret place unknown to the handmaid of Christ, feeling for her very much, made an earnest supplication to God in her behalf. Then she, feeling the pain sensibly decreasing by the pious prayers of the person who was interceding for her, called her maid and said to her, "Go and tell that person to cease praying for me, since while I grow better under the medicine of his supplications, I lose the benefit of the blessed chastisement." And, again, when she was grieved with some vexation, one of her friends was secretly a good deal grieved on her account. But she, who knew by revelation the secrets of the other's heart, sent her maid to him to say, that he was not to grieve on her account, as his grief only augmented what she felt. "I cannot bear," she

said, "that he should be afflicted on my account." For, indeed, she was more pained at other's griefs than at her own infirmities.

Moreover, the spirit of fortitude not only supplied her with patience to bear up under trials and adversities, but also with strength to resist all the allurements of the flesh. So thoroughly had she chastised her body, and brought it into subjection, that it obeyed the smallest dictates of the spirit, yielding without argument, contradiction, or excuse. Her flesh was so disciplined, that far from murmuring against our Lord, it rather made an effort to imitate His fortitude; never was it slothful or lazy, and scarcely ever did it break down under toil or weariness. Indeed, this minstrel of God's praise had so weakened and reduced her body, by extending it as it were on the two beams of the cross, that for many years she never felt even the first motions of lust rise within her. This gave her such confidence even among men, that in the great purity and innocent simplicity of her heart, she thought that all were like herself. Thus it happened once that an intimate friend of hers, in the excess of his spiritual affection, grasped her hand and pressed it with great warmth, but though he had no impure or evil thought in what he did, yet in consequence of this too great liberty he felt the very first beginnings of impure desire arising. She, on the other hand, felt nothing of this kind, nor was aware that he did so, but she heard a voice above her saying, "Do not touch me." She did not, however, understand what was meant by this, for God

who is meek, and compassionates our infirmities, would not that the man should be overcome with confusion and shame in the presence of the saint. But He was zealous for the chastity of His handmaid, and, therefore, so chastised him, as to warn him of his danger. Accordingly, when she told him that she had heard a voice saying, "Do not touch me," but was entirely in the dark as to what was meant by it, he understood what was intended to be conveyed to him, and accordingly he thanked the Lord for sparing him the shame and confusion of having his infirmity discovered, and so departed, remembering for the future to be more cautious.

OF THE SPIRIT OF GOOD COUNSEL WITH WHICH SHE WAS ENDUED.

By the help of the spirit of counsel, Mary was enabled to do everything well, to act without confusion or precipitation, and to do all she did with care, deliberation, and forethought. In all that she did or left undone, she looked for Him who should preserve her from all meanness of spirit or inconsiderate rashness, so that, on the one hand, she omitted nothing through weakness or poorness of spirit, while on the other, she did nothing rashly, hastily, or inconsiderately. In all her ways her eyes went before her steps, and she did everything with full reflection, lest she should

ever be sorry for the smallest thing she did. How, indeed, could she do anything hastily and without calm reflection, whose mind was filled with and taken possession of by Him, who says of Himself "I, Wisdom, dwell with Prudence, and have part in counsels of knowledge." Yet although she was abundantly supplied with the counsel of the Holy Spirit from within, and was well furnished with a knowledge of the Holy Scriptures, yet she so abounded in the virtue of humility, that she was ever ready to renounce her own will for the advice of others, and lest she should seem prudent in her own eyes, she did not disdain willingly and devotedly to put herself in subjection. Of her familiar friends, many who had often experienced her divine prudence, would venture upon nothing of importance without her advice; for if she did not understand what was best by human reason, she would offer a prayer to God, and tell at once by divine inspiration what advice to give. Once, for instance, there was a friend of hers, who contented with his lowliness, was humbly serving God in his own station, and that with all the greater safety, because removed from all worldly pomp, and out of sight of men. This man was invited by a nobleman to come and be his steward, and to look after his affairs, and see that he was provided with horses and clothes, and other things of that sort, in abundance. Before consenting, he went to the saint, to ask counsel of her. She, however, did not presume on herself or her own abilities, but first making a prayer, she then returned, and gave an answer from the

Divine Oracle she had been consulting. "I have seen," she said, "in this matter, a black horse prepared for you, and he neighs towards the infernal regions, and a great multitude of demons are clapping him on; I would, therefore, advise you to remain in the state to which you have been called, lest, perchance, through ambition, or the pomp of the world, you should give the devil an opening to tempt you."

Another person who was greatly beloved by those who knew him, on account of his humility, held a prebendal stall, which was just sufficient for his support. Overcome, however, by the entreaties of his friends, he was induced to accept another, both higher in dignity and of larger income. Nevertheless, being a devout and considerate person, he consulted the handmaid of Christ whether he had offended God by what he had done. She, according to her custom, asked for a little time before returning an answer, but afterwards, as if divinely inspired, and assured beyond all doubt by the revelation that was vouchsafed to her, she answered; "I saw a man clothed in white and ready for the race, without any load or encumbrance, but afterwards he put on a black cloak, and was laden with a useless burden." Such was the answer she gave him; but he, having already perceived by the motions of the Holy Spirit what she had been divinely commissioned to tell him, and being a prudent man who feared God, and so acquiesced in wholesome counsel, immediately resigned the prebend, lest he might be the means of keeping another out of it, and retained only the first which

was necessary as a maintenance. Be not displeased at this, O my brothers, who seek one dignity after another, and add preferment to preferment. What I have related is not my own, but what Christ has revealed. Neither be indignant with the handmaid of Christ, nor malign her innocence. For in what has she injured you by the salutary advice she gave to her friend, which was but what she had heard from the Lord? But, alas, while ye study the works of Gratian, but few of you will turn over the leaves of this little memoir of the saint, or if perchance you do, you will consider her visions but as phantoms or dreams, and will only laugh at and repudiate them. Just as the Pharisees, when our Lord spoke against avarice and declared that the rich should by no means enter the kingdom of heaven, not only mocked and derided him, but pronounced him to be mad.

That I may relate the deeds of this holy woman without respect of persons, I will not even spare myself, but narrate a story reflecting on my own character. When I first began my unworthy ministrations in preaching to simple rustics, and had not as yet got into the habit and exercise of making sermons, I was ever in great fear lest I should fail and break down before I had finished. I was, therefore, accustomed to collect matter from all quarters to bear on my subject, and whatever I had in my mind I failed not to bring forth, for as we read, the fool uttereth all his mind, but the wise man reserveth himself till afterwards. Accordingly, it often happened, that coming to

myself after the sermon was over, and calling to mind how vaguely and loosely I had spoken, without any order or method, I felt not a little pained and vexed with myself. The saint, on some occasion, saw me depressed with sadness on this account, but I refused to tell her the cause; and what was still more miserable, when a certain one commended me as having spoken clearly and to the purpose, and said in the usual phrase, that he had taken great pleasure in listening to me, I was consoled and pleased with this. I blush to speak of my own shame, but I do not dare to conceal the praises of this holy woman. When she saw me one day covered with this cloud of sadness, and confounded in my work, like those of Babel in old time, she discovered to me the twofold wound of temptation with which I was secretly oppressed, and that in a wonderful way. "I saw," she said, "a man covered with a cloud, and overshadowed as it were by a great weight of superfluous hair, and a certain courtesan, resplendent with rays, spoke softly to him, and casting glances at him, walked round and round him, and having done this several times, she at length cast one of her rays towards him, and so dispelled a part of the cloud which hung about him." At this parable of hers I quickly understood the triple disease under which I was labouring, for it was the superfluity of my vain desires, and my ambition not yet curtailed, that made me sad, and the courtesan represented my elation and excitement, which gave me a miserable comfort by pandering to my vanity. I know not by what praises

to extol you, O, holy woman, to whom even God revealed His secrets. Nor did He grant to you this knowledge of the thoughts of men in vain, but with it conferred on you the power of healing their weaknesses by virtue of your prayers.

There was, near Willambrock, a good and holy recluse, of the name of Heldewis, whom the saint was familiar with, and whom she had a great affection for, having brought her up as her own daughter in the Lord, for nearly twelve years. This girl being tried by something that weighed very heavily upon her, the saint disclosed to her all her temptations, and the very thoughts she had, not a little to her astonishment, and then fortified her against the temptations which were coming upon her long before they actually came. This recluse received great consolation from the presence of Abbot Guido, who was then chaplain of the church at Willambrock, and as those temptations which fall on one suddenly and without being anticipated, disturb the soul more than others, the saint foretold her half a year before it happened, that he, together with his brother John, would have to leave Willambrock, and gave her many admonitions to bear their absence in peace and calm, though she loved their presence so much. Moreover, she told her that a certain religious woman named Beselene, who for a long time had served the handmaid of Christ with great reverence and fidelity, and from whose conversation the recluse received great consolation, was going to leave her office and go away,

a long time before it happened, and urged her to bear with patience and equanimity what God was pleased to appoint.

There was, on another occasion, a certain abbot in France, who had planned a journey to the country of Oignies. One of the brothers of the house I have mentioned above, was going to set out for Paris, that he might accompany that abbot. The saint, however, urged him not to go. "Wait a little," she said, "and do not be in a hurry, for there is a messenger sent by the abbot now on the way." The brother accordingly took her advice, and waited for the arrival of the messenger, which she had foretold by her prophetic spirit.

And, again, when this abbot had set out for Rome, to visit the shrines of the apostles, a false report was spread that he was dead, and his friends believing it, mourned for him. They were just going to celebrate mass for him, when the saint told them that he was still alive, and would return to them on a certain day, which she named, safe and sound. Already he had, she told them, left Rome. All were struck with astonishment, and accordingly put off saying mass for him, and the event turned out as she had foretold.

CHAPTER IV.

OF THE SPIRIT OF UNDERSTANDING WHICH MARY POSSESSED FOR THE CONTEMPLATION OF DIVINE THINGS, AND HER KNOWLEDGE OF THINGS FUTURE AND ABSENT.

Thus was the daughter of Jerusalem ornamented with precious gifts of the Spirit like so many jewels, or as it were so many lamps, which enlightened her, so that her heart being purified from all earthly affections, her conversation was in heaven by the spirit of understanding. Her soul was like the eagle, which loves lofty flights, so that for a whole day, or sometimes for many, she would rise higher and higher, and gaze at the sun without being driven back to earth by its rays. Rather they had the effect of drying up in her all the moisture of sensible things, and dispelling the mists of earthly imaginations, so that by this means she saw as in a clear glass the simple forms of divine things without any admixture of human imaginations or ideas. For all human and sensible forms being banished from her mind, those which were heavenly and supernatural appeared to her all the more vividly, uniformly, and invariably, the more nearly they approached the simple and supreme majesty of the unchanging and eternal God. Her pure and subtle spirit, being all on fire with the flame of Divine love, ascended like a wreath of

incense smoke, and penetrated into the skies, and there in the land of the living going to and fro, it sought in the streets and the lanes Him whom it loved. One while it was filled with delight at the holy Virgins like so many pure lilies; and at another it was refreshed with the scented roses of the holy martyrs. Sometimes it was received with honour by the Senate of the Blessed Apostles, or again was associated with choirs of happy angels. When at length she had ascended through all the ranks of heaven, and had passed with a joyous heart through every part of Paradise, she found Him whom her soul ardently longed for; then at last she rested in peace, and remained in undisturbed tranquillity. And forgetful of all that she had passed through, she could now no longer pray for her friends, however dear, nor think of the holy angels, and leaving the saints as it were behind her, she clung to Him whom she thirsted for.

When, accordingly, she was able to look into the book of life more closely, the spirit of understanding, with which she was filled, enabled her to discover many things in it. Thus three years before men took the cross against the Provence Heretics, she said that she saw crosses coming down from heaven on a great number of people. Yet there was not at that time so much as any mention of these heretics in our country, but our Lord had frequently complained to her in spirit that nearly the whole of that district had deserted Him, and that He was cast out as an exile from it. And again, when the holy martyrs of

Christ, who, in their zeal for the honour of their crucified Lord, had come from a great distance to avenge his dishonour, had reached a place called Mongaucy, and had been slain by the enemies of the cross of Christ; the saint, though at so great a distance from the place, saw the holy angels receiving the souls of those who were killed, with joy and congratulation, and bearing them to heaven without any purgatory. From this she conceived such an ardent desire of going to the spot, that if she could have effected it in any manner without giving scandal, she would scarcely have been restrained. And when, as if to ridicule the idea, we asked her what she would do when she got there: "At least," she said, "I would honour God's name by praising and blessing Him in the place where those impious persecutors blasphemed and denied Him."

When a certain intimate friend of our house at Oignies, one who had taken the cross, was dying, she saw a great herd of evil spirits, roaring and raging, and ready to devour their prey. She rebuked them sharply, however, and bade them depart from one who was a servant of Christ, and defended by the sign of the cross. Notwithstanding this, they maliciously laid many grievous charges against him, and objected to him that he had not walked in the way of truth. She, however, supplicated our Lord in behalf of the sick man, and saw thereupon a luminous cross descend upon him, and protect him on all sides. And though he was in this way overtaken with death before he had joined

the expedition, yet because he had had the intention, and it was not through his fault, a great part of his purgatory was remitted, as God revealed to this holy woman.

There was besides another friend of ours, a man noble by his birth, but more so by his faith, who served God with great devotion, and desired as far as in him lay to give up all things for Christ's sake. His wife, however, was a very worldly person, and violently opposed to his design. He was then in great apprehension lest his unruly wife should oblige him to leave the house, for as Solomon says, there are three things which drive a man out of his house, smoke, and the rain dropping in, and a quarrelsome and wicked woman. Mary, however, felt great compassion for the young man, and offered up many prayers to God for his wife, and consoled him by telling him that his wife would soon be converted to the Lord. This accordingly we know to have happened so, and returned thanks to God for it. For indeed she came to despise the vanities of the world perfectly, and as she had before been opposed to the pious designs and wishes of her husband, so she now seconded them with all the greater zeal, and going before, even drew on her husband, whom she had before impeded and kept back.

Again there was a canon of the Church of St. Gertrude at Nivelle, who was lying ill of his last sickness, and the brothers of Oignies were anxious for a good reason to know the day of his death. They told a certain layman of Nivelle, who was then at Oignies, that he should go and bring them

word when the canon was dying. The holy woman said to this person, "If you wish to tell them what they have desired you in time, you had better set off early, and make what haste you can." And she was right, for the next day as he was entering Nivelle, the bells were tolling for his decease.

Once on a Shrove Tuesday, when people in the world are accustomed to give themselves up freely to all sorts of revelry, she saw some devils retiring in great sadness and confusion from a nun whom they had been attacking with great fury, but against whom, by God's mercy, they had not prevailed. After she had seen this, the nun was asked how she had been at that time: "I was," she said, "in great distress, but at such a moment by the grace of God I was relieved." And the other knew that it was at that very time that Mary had seen the devils retire in confusion.

She was present one day when a priest was saying mass, and as she very frequently used to pray for that priest, and he could make her no better return, that he might not be ungrateful for her kindness, he determined to offer the holy sacrifice for her. The mass being over, she said to him; "That mass was mine; to-day you offered up the Eternal Son to His Father, on my behalf." He was struck with astonishment, and asked her how she knew it, since it is God alone who knows the thoughts of men. "I saw," she replied, "a beautiful dove descend upon your head at the altar, and in flying, it extended, as it were, its

wings towards me; I knew, therefore, in spirit, that the Holy Ghost transferred that mass to me."

When priests said mass with devotion and attention, she saw the holy angels rejoicing and assisting them with great delight, looking at them with an air of great affection, and showing a great reverence for them. Woe, then, to those priests, the companions of the traitor Judas, who, as far as in them lies, crucify Christ afresh, and deem the blood of the covenant an unholy thing; they, I mean, who irreverently approach the venerable sacrament with polluted hands, with unchaste eyes, with poisoned mouth and impure heart, and so offend the holy angels who are present, and miserably turn the most wholesome medicine of life, into a means of death. Once, when a friend of hers whom she had a great regard for, was being ordained priest at Paris, she, though absent in the body, was spiritually present, and knew all that was done. Nay, she even described to the wondering priest all she had seen, the vestments he had on, and the place where he stood, and how he was anointed, and even his frame of mind and disposition. Moreover, she told him in a letter which a messenger of his took to him at Paris, something which he could not comprehend at all until it had come to pass. Her words were, "A new tree is now in bloom, the first fruits of which God has destined to me." And, indeed, it so happened by the direction of heaven, that although he had purposed to celebrate his first mass in France, yet he actually did so in Oignies, and this holy woman was present at it.

OF THE SPIRIT OF WISDOM WHICH MADE HER TO TASTE THE SWEETNESS OF GOD'S LOVE ON THE FESTIVALS OF CHRIST AND HIS SAINTS.

In order that the wise Artificer, might bring to perfection this His work, the great High Priest his temple, and the King of Heaven His daugher, He adorned her with the last of the seven-fold gifts of the Spirit, to be as it were, the seasoning of the rest, and thus gave her character the last touch and finish of beauty. This gift was the the spirit of wisdom, which though the first in point of dignity, is the last in its consummation. By the power of this gift she was enabled to taste, as it were, and see the sweetness of the Lord. Her soul was filled as with marrow and fatness. Like the blessed Joseph, she was filled at noonday from the table of the Lord, she was replenished with dainties, and leant on the arm of her beloved ; she ate of honey and milk from the lips of her spouse, and her very innermost heart being stirred within her by the sweet gift of Divine wisdom all her words were sweetened by it, and her actions were enriched with the oil of spiritual grace. And thus she was kind and gentle of heart ; her speech was sweet, her deeds were full of benevolence, and she herself was inebriated with Divine love. Indeed, this abstraction and absence from sensible things was so great, that sometimes when the bell rang for none or vespers, she

would start up as if from sleep, and ask if it was the hour of prime yet. Sometimes, when she had been for three days in bed and had been resting in sweet repose with her eternal Spouse, the time seemed to her to steal away so quickly, through her extreme happiness and joy, that she thought she had not been remaining there for more than a moment. And there was a wonderful variety in her affections, so that sometimes she thirsted as it were, for her Lord, and at other times hungered for Him. And as Scripture says, "They who eat me shall yet hunger, and they who drink me shall yet thirst," so it was with her; the more she was sensible of her Lord's presence, the more did her desire of Him increase. Her anxious desire after Him was so great that she cried out for Him. She entreated Him not to depart, and as it were, clasped her arms round Him and held Him, beseeching Him with tears to continue to manifest Himself to her.

At other times, for the space of three days or more, she seemed to embrace her Lord and press him to her bosom under the form of a young child, and she would, on these occasions, hide herself that she might not be seen by others. The gentle Son of the Virgin would sometimes for her comfort manifest Himself to His daughter, as a child whom she would kiss and fondle, sometimes as a meek and innocent lamb, lying in her bosom, and sometimes as a dove. Sometimes, again, she would see Him under the figure of a ram, with a bright star on His forehead, going round the church and visiting His faithful ser-

vants. For as our Lord was pleased to show Himself to his doubting disciples under the form of a stranger; and as when He sent His blessed apostle Thomas, to the Indies, He appeared to him under the guise of a merchant; so is He wont to show Himself to His faithful servants, under amiable and lovely forms, just as St. Jerome tells us that St. Paula, when she went to Bethlehem, saw Him as an infant lying in the manger. Moreover, He was accustomed on the great festivals to show Himself to his handmaid in a form suitable to the day. Thus on the Nativity He appeared to her as an infant sucking at the breast of His Virgin Mother, or weeping in the cradle, and then she would feel towards Him as to a child, and according to the various appearances which He showed to her, she would have the different affections which were most suitable. And these were renewed year by year as the festivals came round. On the feast of the Purification she saw the Blessed Virgin offering her Son in the temple, and Simeon taking Him up in his arms; nor was her joy less at this sight than if she had herself been present in the temple. It happened to her once on this feast, that her candle having gone out in the procession, and that some time before, it lighted up all of a sudden with a bright flame, for our Lord Himself had lighted it. In Passiontide our Lord would sometimes appear to her on the cross, but this seldom, as she could scarce endure the sight. When any great solemnity approached, she would not unfrequently feel great

joy for eight days before, and thus, throughout the course of the year, she was variously affected with different feelings, according to what the church was at that time celebrating.

When the festival of any particular saint was at hand, that saint was wont to acquaint her with it, and on the day itself he would pay her a visit, with a great multitude of heavenly spirits, and she would pass the whole day with him in spirit with great joy and gladness; and thus from familiar and frequent intercourse with the saints, she learn to distinguish one saint and angel from another, just as a man does his friends and neighbours. And sometimes a saint who was entirely unknown in that part of the country, would acquaint her with his festival, which was being celebrated in some distant part, in order that she might rejoice at it. Even when she was told nothing about it, her heart made her feel which were feast days and which were not, for those which were distinguished by any solemnity were more sweet and delightful to her than common days. All the festivals were written in her heart as in a martyrology. Accordingly it happened once that she was in a village called Lenlos, in a church dedicated to St. Gertrude, and on the next day there should have been a feast in honour of St. Gertrude celebrated there, but the priest of that place had not observed it. The saint, however, perceiving within herself that the feast was approaching could not contain herself any longer, and since the priest did not make his appearance, nor any

one to ring the bells for the Vespers on the preceding day, as is usual on such occasions, she rose from her place and rang the bells herself as well as she could. The priest hearing this ran to the church, and asked why the bells were rung, for it is not usual, he said, to ring them at this hour, unless on the eve of a feast. Mary was covered with great confusion and fear, and answered timidly, "Pardon me, father, but it is a great festival to-night, for I feel the church overflowing with joy, though I do not know whose feast it is." The priest upon this looked over the calendar, and found that the feast of St. Gertrude ought to be celebrated next day.

So many and so great were the consolations which she received from our Lord, that though she did not, like most persons, seek for any recreation in exterior things, yet she was always content to remain alone and in one place, and she never felt this irksome or wearisome. On a certain occasion, as she was sitting in her little cell, she heard the most sweet voice of our Lord, saying: "This is my beloved daughter, in whom is My delight." And being carried out of herself, it seemed to her that she was reclining her head upon the knees of her glorified Saviour. At other times, she was saluted by some one of the saints in heaven, by means of an angel, who brought the message. Again, when she was praying before an altar of St. Nicholas, she saw blood flow from his relics. She saw, too, some rays of light issuing from a crucifix, and reaching to her, so as to penetrate to her heart. And

all these things gave her wonderful delight and spiritual strength.

St. Bernard, the Father and light of the Cistercian Order, appeared to her one day, as it were, with wings, and spread them over her. She sat with him a long time in the chancel of the church, conversing with him, and, at last, she asked him what those wings were which he had on. He answered that they meant, that like an eagle, he had mounted aloft, and had reached the high and subtle meanings of Scripture, and that God had unlocked many of His heavenly secrets to him. She had, moreover, an especial veneration and love for St. John the Evangelist. It happened that she was one day confessing some slight venial fault to the priest, but with so many tears, and sighs, that the priest asked her why she cried so much. "I cannot restrain my tears;" she answered. For, indeed, she saw as it were, an eagle on her breast, who was, as into a fountain, dipping his beak into it, and filling the air with loud cries; and she understood in spirit that the Blessed John was offering up her sighs and tears to God.

Once Mary saw a certain priest celebrating mass with great devotion, and even with tears, and it seemed to her that a dove descended on to the shoulders of the priest, and that a beautiful spring of water burst from them. At another time she saw the Son of the Virgin in the form of a boy, with an exceeding bright light round the pyx where the body of the Lord was; and upon our asking her about the beautiful light that she saw,

she answered that it exceeded the brightness of the sun as much as the light of the sun surpasses that of a candle. On the occasion of some relics being brought to our church, she perceived in spirit that they were near, and rejoiced at their presence the whole night long. She saw, too, in a vision, Christ and some other relics, as it were receiving these relics with great joy and veneration. And she had a wonderful faculty of perceiving whether relics were true ones. There was a small cross in the Church of Oignies which had in it a small portion of the true cross ; this she saw all luminous and emitting bright rays of heavenly light. A certain acquaintance of ours, a friend of our family, found, among other relics that he had, a bone of some saint, but as there was no certificate belonging to it, he did not know whose relics they were. The saint, however, when they were brought to her to be certified, perceived in spirit that they were true ones, and had great virtue in them. She prayed, therefore, that God would shew her whose they were, and immediately a saint of most eminent merit appeared to her. She asked him who he was ; but without giving her his name, he only presented before her mind four letters. These letters she remembered, but as she did not understand what they meant, she called in a certain cleric, and asked him to explain them. The letters were A. I. O. L. These he compared and put together, and told her what they meant, so that she understood plainly that they signified the blessed Aiolis, who was held in great honour at

Pruvinum, in Campania, and that the aforesaid relics were his.

Mary's desire of eternal bliss, and her longings for the Beatific vision were so great and ardent that this life was like an exile in which she languished and pined. Her only comfort and great delight, till she arrived at the land of promise, was the manna of life which comes down from heaven. This soothed all her cares and longings, and it was this by which her griefs were softened, and her soul strengthened. By this sovereign and Blessed Sacrament she was enabled to endure all the toils and hardships of her pilgrimage with patience; she could overcome all the labours and difficulties of this weary desert, and she cared little for all the miseries of our wretched existence here, so long as she lived on this quickening food. This Sacred Bread strengthened her heart; and this heavenly Wine inebriated and gladdened her soul. She was filled with the holy food of Christ's Flesh, and His life-giving Blood cleansed and purified her. This was the only comfort which she could not endure to be without. To receive Christ's body was the same thing with her as to live; and to die was, in her mind, to be separated from her Lord by not partaking of this Blessed Sacrament. She had already learned by experience in this world, what our Lord says in the Gospel, "Unless ye eat the Flesh of the Son of Man, and drink his Blood, ye shall not have life in you." "He who eats My Flesh, and drinks my Blood, has eternal life." And this saying, so far from being a hard

one to her, as it was to the Jews, was most sweet and comforting; since she experienced not only all interior delight and consolation from receiving Him, but even a sensible sweetness in her mouth, like the taste of honey. Oftentimes our Lord came to her under the appearance of a Boy, with the taste of honey, and the smell of fragrant odours, and she received Him in the pure and well-ornamented chamber of her heart, and was filled with joy. And as her thirst for the life-giving Blood of her Lord was so great that she could not bear it, she sometimes entreated that, at least, the bare chalice might be left on the altar after mass, that she might feast her sight with it.

CHAPTER V.

HER ARRIVAL AT OIGNIES, WHERE SHE DIED.

As we have now described, not certainly as much as we could wish, but as much as we were able, the precious jewels of this daughter of the Great King, and the fragrant garments of this Spouse of Christ; let us pass on now to the skirts of her glorious apparel, and see her happy passage from this world; that we may thus complete our offering to the Lord. For a long time she had remained at Willambrock, which we have so often mentioned, and there immolated herself to God. But as she was very near to a town called Nivelle, there was always a great

number of people coming to see her from there out of devotion, so that at last, being desirous of giving herself wholly to the service of God, she could no longer endure the continual interruption. She therefore made earnest and frequent prayer to God that He would be pleased to choose a fit place for His handmaid, and persons who would humbly condescend to her for the sake of their Lord. Accordingly a house was pointed out to her in spirit, which she had never seen, at Oignies, and which moreover was so poor, and so recently established, that it was scarcely known. She deliberated about it, and though she knew nothing of the place, nevertheless she trusted to her Lord's promise, and first obtained leave, like a daughter of true obedience, from her husband John, and his brother, Abbot Guido, who was her spiritual father, to visit the place, and if she thought fit, remain there. As they were unwilling to grieve her whom they loved with all their souls, they gave their consent. For indeed God inspired them to yield to her, nor did they ever dream that she was to remain in a place which she knew nothing about, and where she had not so much as a single acquaintance. Under the inspiration then and direction of the Most High, she set out for the place destined for her, and when she was now some little distance off, Blessed Nicholas, the patron of the place, came forth to meet her on the way, and conducted her to his Church with great exultation. She had felt a strange feeling of wonder all that day; for she felt within herself that some

solemnity of St. Nicholas was at hand, and yet she knew well enough that St. Nicholas's day came just before Christmas, and not in May, as it was then. Yet so indeed it was, for on the very day on which she arrived, the Brothers of Oignies were celebrating a great feast in honour of his translation. When she reached the place, she showed an intimate acquaintance with the situation and arrangements of the house, and with the brothers; for God had wonderfully shown her everything. She not only knew that it was the feast of St. Nicholas there, but she foretold that she should end her days there, and showed me secretly the very place in the church where they would place her sepulchre when she was dead. The event proved the truth of her prediction, for in spite of the greatest endeavours to bring her back from Oignies, she ended her life there, and was buried in the very spot which she had pointed out to me, though great opposition was made to her lying there.

HER PIOUS AND CAREFUL PREPARATION FOR DEATH.

After the saint had, at the command of God, left her country and her kindred, and rested all the more sweetly, because the more securely under the shadow of Him whom she desired, how many blessings did her Lord shower down upon her in that place! It is impossible to conceive, much

more to recount at length, how much oftener than before He refreshed and consoled her, by sending holy angels to visit her ; how often she was permitted close and familiar intercourse with the Mother of our Lord in the church, nay, how often our Lord Himself appeared visibly present to her. And the nearer she approached to the long desired harbour of her rest, and as the last year of her life came nigher and nigher, so much the more abundantly did God open to her the treasures of His exceeding bounty. As much as six years before, she had foretold to the abbot Guido, of Nivelle, and to us, both the year of her death, and the time of the year, though she had not named the day. As, then, the time drew near which God had foretold to her, and it was now the last year she had to remain in this world, she was so filled with joy, that she could not contain herself. She sighed, she panted, and cried out, through her yearning desire of embracing her Lord. "I will not, O Lord," she exclaimed, "that you should depart without me. I cannot remain here any longer. I long to go to my home." And thus while she was carried out of herself, and her spirit was inflamed within her through her ardent desire, the overflowing fulness of her heart seemed to tear her body to pieces, so that for some time after she returned to herself, she could not stand on her feet. The fire of her soul was so great, that she was hurried away by it, and gave vent to her feelings by loud exclamations, and her face seemed all on fire, and what is still more wonderful, on these occasions, when her soul

was wrapt in ecstasy, she could look at the orb of the sun without blinking; then being drunk as it were with the Spirit, she could no longer keep silence, but would cry out, "The Lord has told me that I shall ascend to the Holy of Holies. Oh, sweetest of words! Tell me, Clementia," which was her maid's name, "what is the Holy of Holies?" For she was so filled with the Spirit, that she asked her for an explanation of what neither of them could as yet understand; yet she would often repeat the word over, so sweet was it to her ears. When she recovered herself, she would wonder, because she had been in a deeper ecstasy than usual; but it was whispered to her, "Do not marvel, for this is the last year of time you have to live." And she heard too the voice of the Lord, saying to her, "Come, my beloved, my spouse, my dove, and thou shalt be crowned." On one occasion she was more than usually forgetful of herself, and carried away by the violence of her feelings, out of the abundance of her heart, among many other things she exclaimed, "The garments of the King's daughter smell like sweet incense, and the limbs of her body are like precious relics sanctified by God."

In the year in which she passed into rest, I was preparing myself according to the office entrusted to me by the legate of the holy father, for preaching and for giving the cross to those whom God inspired against the heretics. At this time she enquired of me when I proposed to return. I answered that my absence would be a very long one. In that case, she replied, I leave you by my will what I

wish you to have after my death. At this time, and up to the beginning of Lent, she had no complaint, yet she knew of her death long beforehand, as we have before said, and when she told me this, she acquainted me at the same time that her death was close at hand. Being then uncertain about the time of my return, she hastened to make her will, in which she left me her girdle, and a linen handkerchief with which she used to wipe away her tears, and some other little things more precious to me than gold and silver. As the time drew on, and her long-desired illness began to approach, which was to close her earthly life, she said to her maid, a devout virgin who waited on her, "I fear that I shall be a great burthen to you and to others, for I must depart out of this life to God, by a long and severe sickness. Who can assist me for so long a time?" Indeed, she was always afraid lest any one should be put to any trouble on her account, whereas the real state of the case was, that all were grieved that they could not assist her, and wait on her more often. She foretold that she should lie dead on a Monday, and accordingly, for a whole year before, she fasted so rigidly on that day, as hardly ever to eat anything upon it.

As the time of her departure appproached nearer, she busied herself the more unintermittingly, both night and day, in endeavouring to serve and please God. From the Feast of the Annunciation of our Blessed Lady, to that of the Nativity of St. John the Baptist, she only took food eleven times, and that in very small quan-

tities; being ever full of joy, and looking forward to the day of her heavenly espousals with the greatest exultation. She had a great and most special devotion to St. Andrew, who had embraced the cross with such ardent love, that he would not come down from it, and she received many and most familiar visits from him. Some time before her last sickness, the blessed apostle said to her: "Be of good comfort, my daughter, for I will not leave you; and as I once confessed the faith of Christ, and would not deny it, so, in the day of your departure, I will acknowledge you before God, and assist you in your last moments, and give my witness to you."

The promised time which she had anticipated by many tears, and prayed for with many sighs and groans, at last arrived. And suddenly there was a sound heard: the voice of the turtle-dove, the voice of praise and thanksgiving, the sound of joy and feasting, like the voice of the Most High God. For, indeed, it was He Himself who wiped away the tears from the eyes of His handmaid, and filled her heart with joy, and her lips with melody. She began to sing with a loud and clear voice, and ceased not for as much as three days and nights to praise God and to return Him thanks; singing in the sweetest strains of God, of the Blessed Virgin, of the saints, of her friends, and of the Holy Scriptures. Nor was she ever at a loss either for ideas or for words to express them; but God taught her so plainly what she should say at the time, that it was as if all were written out before her eyes. She con-

tinued singing aloud, and that without once stopping either to think what she should say, or to arrange her words into verse. It seemed to her that one of the seraphim spread his wings over her breast, and by his inspiration and sweet assistance she uttered this hymn without any difficulty. Having sung in this way through the whole day, at nightfall she became so hoarse that she could hardly speak audibly. The prior of our house was rejoiced at this, because on the following day, which was Sunday, a great many secular people are wont to meet together from various quarters in our Church; and if they had heard her singing with so loud and shrill a voice, without ever ceasing, they might have been scandalized, and would have thought her out of her senses. For the children of this world, being children of grief, do not wonder if any one cries out through excess of trouble or pain, like those in the pangs of childbirth. But if any one through the excess of joy, and the overflowings of his heart, is compelled to give utterance to his feelings in exclamations and gestures, they are struck with wonder and amazement. The children of joy, on the other hand, feel no surprise at this, nor are they scandalised at it, but, in all humility, adore the mighty works of God in His saints.

However, when the next morning had come, our minstrel began to sing louder, and more clearly than ever. For the angel of the Lord had sent a most sweet unction into her breast, which had taken away all her hoarseness, and made her

voice clear as before. Being thus renewed, she ceased not to praise God almost throughout the whole day. The people without heard nothing but the sweet sounds of mirth and melody. For the prior had caused all the doors to be closed, and the people to be shut out, while he and the maid of the saint remained within the church. In this way they heard all that she said, much of which they could not understand, for indeed what she spoke about were the secrets of heaven. Some things, however, they did understand, yet, alas! it was but little they could remember. First of all she entoned her loudest and highest Antiphon, in honour of the Blessed Trinity, in which she adored the Trinity in Unity, and Unity in Trinity, for a long time, filling her song with most wonderful and ineffable things. Then she expounded, in a new and marvellous way, some parts of the Holy Scriptures, passages of the Psalms, and of the Gospels, and others out of the Old and New Testament, and treated learnedly and acutely about things which she had never learnsd. From the Trinity she descended to the humanity of Christ, next she spoke of the Blessed Virgin, then of the holy angels, next of the apostles, and so on of the other saints in order. Lastly, she came to her friends still living in the world, as to those in the lowest grade, and about these she said much, commending them in order one by one to God, and offering many prayers for them. And all this was in verse, and moreover in Latin.

Among the wonderful things she said, one was that the holy angels derived their knowledge and

wisdom from the light of the Holy Trinity, but that by the light of Christ's glorified body they came to have joy and fruit in the souls of holy persons. She constantly declared that the Blessed Virgin was now glorified in body as well as in soul, and that the bodies of those saints who rose at the Passion, never afterwards returned to corruption. She said with great joy, that the Holy Spirit would soon visit His Church, and would send labourers into it in greater abundance than usual, for the good of souls throughout the whole of Christendom, and would extend the light of the gospel over a great part of the world ; (referring to the orders of St. Francis and St. Dominic, which were soon to be instituted.) In speaking of blessed Stephen, the proto-martyr, whom she called the rose-garden of Paradise, she said that when he prayed for his murderers at his death, God gave St. Paul to his prayers, and that when afterwards the blessed apostle himself was giving up his spirit at his martyrdom, St. Stephen was near, and offered his soul to God, saying, "This is the great and beautiful gift which I received from Thee ; I return it to Thee now with multiplied fruit."

She then made many supplications in behalf of a certain preacher whom God had given her, and in praying for him, as she did at some length, she entreated first of all, that God would so preserve him, that when he came to die she might offer up his soul as one which God had entrusted to her, and which she restored with usury. She mentioned all the trials and temptations, and even the

sins of her preacher, which he had formerly been guilty of, and then prayed God to keep him from such for the time to come. The prior, who knew his conscience from hearing his confession, heard her repeat all this, so he went to him and asked him whether he had told the saint all his sins, for, he added, in the course of her singing, she has related all that you have done, just as if she had read it out of a book. She went through the Magnificat a great many times, explaining it in Latin verse, and seemed to experience great sweetness and consolation in this song of the most Blessed Virgin. At last she came towards the end of her singing to the song of Simeon, when with great devotion she commended to God her friends, both men and women, especially the nuns living at Liège, praying that they might have peace, and at the end of each sentence she repeated the first verse of the Nunc Dimittis. In the same way she prayed for the religious of Nivelle, and many others in the diocese of Liège, ever repeating between each the Nunc Dimittis.

HER LAST ILLNESS.

These three days of rejoicing being ended, she directed a couch to be prepared for her in the church before the altar, and returning as it were to herself, she called the

brothers in, and said to them, "The lamentations in which I mourned for my sins have passed over, and so has the song in which I rejoiced and praised God for the eternal joys that await me; now follow the pangs and woes of sickness and death. No food will ever again cross my lips, nor shall I ever read again in this book." As she said this, she gave to them a book, containing some prayers and hymns to the Blessed Virgin, which she was wont to use. Thus she patiently submitted herself to God's gracious chastisement, and awaited her blessed end in silence and hope, and with great joy.

In this sickness she suffered grievous pains, but again would find at intervals a sweet repose, for the saints who had so often come to her in her health, visited her still more frequently in her illness. Christ Himself often appeared to her, looking at her with an eye of pity and sympathy. The Blessed Mother of Christ, too, continually aided her, and above all, blessed Andrew the Apostle, coming to her again and again, gave her great consolation, rendering the pain of the disease scarcely sensible. The holy angels, too, were present, and waited on her with the greatest care. Indeed, one night, when she was very thirsty, and could not rise or walk through excessive weakness, two holy angels supported her, and led her to the place where the water was, and when she had drunk they led her back, so that she returned to her bed without any fatigue. When, too, by the advice of the Blessed Virgin, she received Extreme Unction, all the Apostles were sensibly present to

her; and the blessed Peter showed her his keys, and promised that he would open the gate of heaven for her; and Christ made the sign of His own cross, the standard of His victory, on her feet. Moreover, as she was anointed in her different limbs, she was sensibly conscious of the operation of the Holy Spirit in the sacrament, and she actually perceived His illumination in the anointed part.

Besides this, some of her friends and acquaintance long since dead, were sent to console her; among these was John of Dionanto, who was now reigning with Christ, and Brother Richard of Menehen-Capella, a man of very good and holy life, who, notwithstanding, was still in purgatory. There was one, indeed, still undergoing great torments in purgatory, who presented himself to the handmaid of Christ in that last illness of hers, to ask her aid. He was one who had lived formerly under the name and appearance of a religious, but having thus shown himself in the way of perfection, he scandalously and disgracefully returned to the world, and married a woman who had in a similar way taken up the way of perfection, but had made void her first faith. He said that the fiercest and most exquisite torments he suffered were on account of his having done injury to the church of God by the scandal he had given. The holy bishop of Toulouse came there chiefly for the sake of seeing her, and the saint received the greatest consolation, nay, and even bodily strength for a time from his presence, and the ever Blessed Virgin

raised her up into the air as she thought, to receive him. The same bishop was celebrating High Mass in that church, at an altar dedicated to the Blessed Virgin, when, as he was about to receive the Host, the saint saw as it were a white dove, which put the Blessed Eucharist into the bishop's mouth, and at the same time God showed her his soul transfused and illuminated with a great light.

During her illness she was able to eat absolutely nothing, nor could she even endure the smell of bread; yet, notwithstanding this, she received the Body of our Lord without any difficulty. And this dissolving itself as it were, and passing into her soul, not only comforted her soul, but relieved her bodily weakness immediately. Twice during her illness it happened that on receiving the Sacred Host, her face was illuminated with rays of light. We tried once whether she could take an unconsecrated particle, but she instantly turned away, having a horror for the smell of bread. And the pain and uneasiness she felt at a small portion having touched her teeth, was so great that she began to cry out, to vomit and spit, and to pant and sob, as if her breast would have burst. And thus she continued to cry out a long time, and though she washed her mouth with water over and over again, yet she could hardly rest throughout the greater part of the night. Yet, however infirm she was in body, and however weak and light her head was, since for fifty-three days before her death she ate absolutely nothing, yet she could always bear

the light of the sun, and never closed her eyes against its brightness and splendour. And what is still more strange, though we often sang loudly in the church and rang the church bells, which made a loud and sharp noise, close at her ears, and that for a good while together ; and again, when many masons were striking and knocking with their mallets at an altar which we were having built to be consecrated by the Bishop of Toulouse, yet none of this noise gave her the least disquiet or uneasiness, when once she knew that it was for the service of God, or His Church. She herself said, when we were commiserating her, that the sound did not strike her nerves, nor ever go near her brain, but that she received it directly in her soul, where it gave her great sweetness.

Her friends and acquaintances, upon her sickness being known, flocked in from all quarters to see her. Upon our mentioning, however, the names of some who did not come, she said, "I shall see them before my departure ; while about others she said, "I shall not see them again in this world," and so the event proved. There was a noble lady, formerly the wife of the Duke of Louvain, who, having left the world, had become a nun of the Cistercian Order. This lady had seen the saint a long time before her death, when she was as yet at Willambrock. As she was taking leave, she said, "I do not know, my lady, whether I shall ever see you again." To whom the holy woman replied, "Yes, you will see me again." When, therefore, she heard, at

the place where they lived, which was near Cologne, and a long way off, that the saint was near her end, she said, "I trust in God that I shall still see her as she promised me." And, indeed, it so fell out that when she arrived the bells were being tolled for her death, yet she was present when she was prepared for burial, and at her funeral. She told one of us some things which the Holy Spirit had revealed and promised her should take place after her death. These things we have subjoined, because of the scandal which weak minds may take, in such a way, that when they come to pass, the writing having been referred to, it may be easily seen that they have been foretold. In the mean time I have gladly closed and sealed up these discourses, because many perchance shall pass away before they are accomplished. For some there are, who, unless they see the immediate fulfilment of what God has perhaps designed for the benefit of later generations begin forthwith to murmur, and to say with the Jews, "Command, command again; expect, expect again." Some of them we have already seen fulfilled, such as about the spot where she was to be buried, and the garments which were honoured, and sanctified by the cold which she endured in them, and about the day of the week on which she was to lie dead. And since these things have fallen out as she said, we expect most surely that the rest will do so; as, for instance, what she said of the song of the new feast, promised her by the Lord for the

angels' voices she had heard; or again, concerning the miracles which were to take place on account of the splendours she had seen, for, as we have said, she frequently saw our Lord appearing in great splendour and beauty; concerning the double fast on the two solemn days on account of her two days fast, for it was often her custom, after having fasted for two days, to take food on the third, and, lastly, concerning an image of hers that was to be greatly venerated, because she had greatly venerated and prayed before an image of the Blessed Virgin.

MARY'S HOLY DEATH.

When the hour of her departure out of this world was now at hand, God shewed His daughter her portion of the inheritance of her brethren, and she was permitted to see the place prepared for her in heaven. She saw and rejoiced at the sight of so great and high a reward, the glories of which we might in some measure estimate, could we only remember the precious stones and dazzling gems which were shown to her, and which she recounted to us one by one. But as it is written, Eye hath not seen except Thine, O God, what things Thou hast prepared for those that love Thee, it follows that we cannot comprehend it. All that we can do is to estimate the glory which she would be counted worthy of who served God

so devotedly, and loved Christ with so tender an affection, and whom our Lord honoured with such singular privileges, even upon earth. On the Thursday before her death, we were with her in the evening. She could not speak, nor did she turn her eyes towards us, but kept them fixed immovably on the heavens, for she was lying removed out of her cell in the open air, and her face began to brighten with a wonderful serenity. Through the greatness of her joy, she began to sing in a very low voice, almost like a whisper, for she was too weak to raise her voice high. And this she continued for a long time, with a sweet smile on her face. I came up quite close to hear what she said, but I could not understand anything of her song, except the words, "How fair art Thou, O God our King." After having remained for a long time in this state of joy, singing and laughing, and sometimes clapping her hands, she seemed at length to come to herself, and to feel in some degree a sense of her weakness, which before she had not done, and she began to groan a little. When we asked her what she had seen, she was unwilling, or perhaps unable to speak, except a very few words, merely replying, "I could say wonderful things if I dared." The vespers of Saturday were now drawing on, and at the same time the day of her nuptials, a day of joy and gladness, the day which the Lord had made, and which He had foreseen, and provided and promised to His handmaid. It was a Sunday, the day of the Resurrection, the day of the Vigil of St. John the

Baptist, and the day, too, on which it is said that St. John the Evangelist departed out of this life, though the Church is accustomed to celebrate his festival at a different time. Then the handmaid of Christ, who had now for fifty-two days eaten nothing, began to sing with a most sweet voice, Alleluia, and so continued nearly the whole night through, in joy and praise, as if she were invited to a feast.

On the Sunday the devil appeared to her as if lying in wait to bruise her heel, and gave her great trouble and vexation, for she began to tremble a little, and even to ask those who were standing by, for help. Then, taking courage again from God, she fortified herself with the sign of the cross, and boldly bruised the serpent's head, saying: "Get thee behind me, O filth and abomination!" for she did not call him foul, but filth itself. The evil spirit retiring upon this, she began again to sing Alleluia, and to return thanks to God. As the holy vespers of St. John Baptist approached, at about the same hour when our Lord breathed forth His Spirit on the Cross, that is about the ninth hour, she too departed to her Lord, without changing in the least through the pain of death, the joyful expression of her features, or any other sign of the joy she felt. Indeed, I do not ever remember even when she was in good health, to have seen her face more serene, and peaceful, and happy, than it looked then. She did not, like most persons, become pale and sallow in appearance, but her countenance was fair and bright in angelic sweet-

ness, and dove-like simplicity, so as to incite many to devotion, both in her last moments, and after her death. Many who were bedewed with sweet, but copious floods of tears at the time of her death, felt that they were visited by God through her merits. Indeed, a certain holy woman had foreseen and foretold that those who assisted at her departure should receive great consolation from God. When her holy body was washed after her death, it was found so attenuated, and worn out by sickness, and fasting, that her spine was close upon her stomach, and the joints of it could be seen, only covered, as it were, by a thin skin, like a piece of linen.

Even after death she did not desert those whom she had loved in life, but returned to visit some of them, and conversed very frequently with some women of pure and holy life, and directed their actions, strengthening them in dangers, and removing all doubt from their minds, by secret and certain signs. For some of her friends she obtained by her prayers, as we believe, the illumination of wisdom, and the fervour of charity. Thus it came to pass, that a certain Cistercian monk, after the decease of the saint, saw in his sleep a golden cup coming out of her mouth, from which she gave drink to some of her friends. Another person told me that he had seen in his sleep her body changed into a most exquisite and precious jewel. It was in the twelve hundred and thirteenth year of the Incarnation of the Word, on Sunday, the 23rd of June, on the Vigil of St. John the Baptist, about three in the afternoon, that the

precious pearl of Christ, Mary of Oignies, in about the 36th year of her age, was borne to the palace of the Eternal King, where there is life without death, day without night, truth unalloyed with falsehood, joy without sadness, security without fear or anxiety, rest without toil, and eternity without end: where the mind is not troubled with cares, nor the body afflicted with pain, where the river of Divine pleasure fills all things, and satisfies all with the Spirit of perfect liberty: where we shall know as we are known, when God will be all in all, and our Lord Jesus Christ shall deliver up the kingdom to God and the Father, who lives and reigns with the Father and the Holy Spirit for everlasting ages. Amen.

The above Life of the B. Mary of Oignies was written by Cardinal James of Vitriacum, who, as he was studying theology at Paris, heard of the fame of the saint, whereupon he gave up his studies, though he was exceedingly fond of them, and came to Oignies, where the saint had then newly come to live. When she came to know of this, she entreated him to give up the idea of returning to France, and to remain with the Friars of Oignies, and become her preacher. This he at last consented to, and, accordingly, when he speaks in her life of a certain preacher whom God had given her, and whom at her death she recommended very earnestly to God, it is himself he refers to. There is in the Bollandists Collection,

a Supplement to the Life of Mary, by Friar Nicholas, a Canon Regular of the Convent of Cantipratan, who was a contemporary of the saint and the cardinal, and who has told us a good deal about both. His account of the saint and her miracles is very interesting, but as the above memoir contains a pretty full account of what she did, we shall refrain from entering into it further than to give one or two short extracts of the most remarkable things therein related.

One day, when she was talking to Egidius, the Prior of Oignies, about her preacher, James of Vitriacum, she foretold that he would be a bishop in the Holy Land, and when the prior reproved her for talking so, she repeated that it would really take place, and that he would live to see it, though she should not. "Moreover," she added, "his removal shall be a cause of great sorrow to you, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy, for he shall return again from those parts, and live in your house. The prior was a good deal disturbed at what she said, and told the cardinal. Accordingly it fell out that, in four years time, he was elected and consecrated Bishop of Accon, but before this time had elapsed she had departed out of this life.

Another story that is related of her is a very remarkable one. Mary's mother had been a person living in the world, and among worldly persons, but as such she had been one of a very decent and respectable life, and especially she was in the habit of giving away a good deal in charities to

the poor, so that the saint who loved her as a near relation, one of the same flesh and blood as herself, had a good hope that she would be saved yet so as by fire. As, however, she was not certain, since God's judgments are unsearchable, she prayed earnestly that she might know in what state her mother's soul had passed out of the world. After having shed many tears on this account, it happened one day that, as the Prior Egidius was saying Mass, and Mary was kneeling by the altar, as it were at the feet of her Lord, she was suddenly seized with a great horror which came over her, and upon looking up she saw a dark and gloomy spirit standing near her. She drove away all fear by making the sign of the cross, and then boldly asked the spirit who it was. "I am," it replied, "your mother for whom you made supplication." "How dost thou fare, mother?" she replied, "and in what state art thou?" "In an ill and miserable one," said she, "for the gates of hell shut me in, and condemned as I am to eternal perdition, your prayers are of no avail." Her daughter uttered a deep groan, and when at length she had courage to speak, she said: "Alas, mother, what was the cause of your damnation?" "I was," she said, "brought up and supported by what had been acquired by usury and unjust gain, and although I was conscious of the sin, I did not take any pains to restore what had been taken away, nor did I consider the command of God, but having entered into the crooked ways of the world, I thought it beneath me to change

from the steps of my forefathers. And not having repented of my evil deeds, I at length changed my unfruitful life for death, and have thus lost the life of the world to come." And saying this she disappeared. The handmaid of Christ thought long on what she had seen and heard, and weighing it well, adored the just judgment of the Almighty even in the condemnation of her mother, nor did she shed any more tears for her, or weep any longer for the eternal death of her, from whom she had received her bodily life; for her intellect and soul submitted to the judgment of the Almighty God, who had alone created it, and who is the Judge of all things.

Mary was especially powerful against the spirit of blasphemy, and many miracles are related in which she cured persons who were possessed in this way. Among others Cardinal Hugo, Bishop of Ostia, who succeeded Honorius III., under the title of Gregory IX., was once attacked by very violent temptations against faith, so that he was driven almost to desperation by the repeated attacks of the enemy, and could find no rest or refreshment; his food did not nourish him, and he wasted away with the violence of the conflict, for except when he was in the company of the cardinals assembled in conclave, he was ever harassed with the most horrible and distressing thoughts. At last he opened the state of his mind to Cardinal James of Vitriacum, who had come to Rome from his bishopric in the Holy Land. The latter was full of sympathy for him, and after conferring a good deal with him

on the subject, and giving him a good deal of counsel on the use of the ordinary remedies in such cases, he presented to him the life of the saint which he had already written, entreating him to read it over, as it contained an account of one who was gifted with extraordinary powers against the spirit of blasphemy, and the efficacy of whose intercession had been experienced by many, as well since her death as before it. Cardinal Hugo, who had heard a great deal of Mary, received the book eagerly, and begged his friend to give him some relics of her if possible. The other accordingly presented him with a finger of the saint in a silver case, which he always wore round his neck, and which had been of great help to him in more than one imminent danger. The cardinal accordingly read the book very carefully, and when the evil spirit next attacked him, he had immediate recourse to the relics and intercession of the saint, upon which he was instantly freed from the attacks of the evil one, and felt them no more.

Her Biographer subjoins this remarkable testimony about her. "I have," he said, "as being a person who was educated in those parts, seen and known a great many religious of both sexes, and those of no small spiritual attainments, I have been acquainted with their secret visitations and visions, and she is the only person whom I have never once known to have been deceived by the great enemy of mankind, but always to have understood his wiles and deceits."

Mary's relics were translated with great care

and solemnity on the 12th of October, 1608, by the Bishop of Namur, who removed them from the church of the priory of the Augustinian Canons-Regular to the church dedicated to the saint herself.

THE END.

RICHARDSON AND SON, DERBY.

VOLUMES OF THE SERIES ALREADY PUBLISHED.

No.

1, 2 ..... S. Philip Neri.

3 ..... Companions of S. Philip Neri.

4 ..... S. Thomas of Villanova. S. Francis Solano.

5 ..... S. Rose of Lima. B. Colomba of Rieti. S. Juliana Falconieri.

6 ..... Fathers of the Oratory. B. Sebastian Valfrè. De' Santi. Matteucci.

7, 8 ..... S. Ignatius.

9 ..... B. Sebastian of Apparizio.

10, to 14. S. Alphonso Liguori, with F. Faber's Essay on Canonization.

15 ..... Companions of S. Alphonso Liguori.

16 ..... V. Father Claver, S. J. Cardinal Odescalchi, S.J.

17 ..... F. Anchieta, S. J. V. Alvera von Virmundt. V. John Berchmans, S. J.

18 ..... S. Mary Magdalene of Pazzi.

19 ..... Ven. Benedict Joseph Labre.

20 ..... Fathers of the Oratory: V. Fabrizio dall'Aste. V. F. Mariano Sozzini.

21, 22 ... V. Margaret Mary Alacoque. S. Catherine of Bologna.

23 ..... S. Joseph Calasanctius. B. Ippolito Galantini,

24, 25 ... S. Camillus of Lellis, with Fathers Da Ponte and La Nuza.

26 ..... Fathers of the Oratory: F. Talpa, V. F. Eustachio, F. Prever.

27 ..... Fathers Segneri, Pinamonti, and De Britto, S. J., with a Dissertation on Catholic Missions, by the Rev. F. Faber, Cong. Orat.

28 ..... B. Leonard of Port Maurice. B. Nicholas Fattore.

29, 30, 31. Benedict XIV. on Heroic Virtue.

32, 33 ... S. Jane Frances de Chantal, St. Rose of Viterbo, and B. Mary of Oignies.

Any of the above volumes, to complete sets, may be had separately.

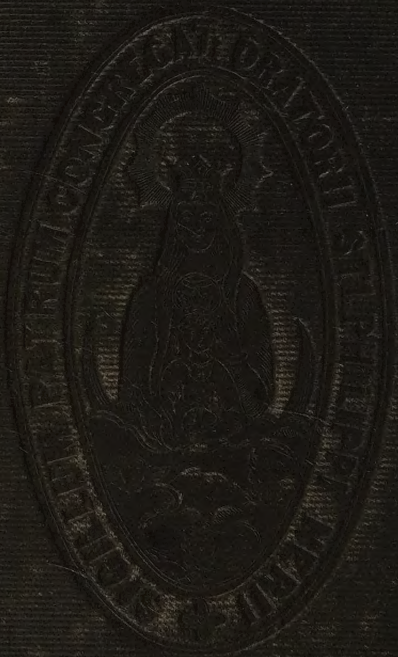
Also uniform with the series,

An Essay on Canonization and Beatification, by the Rev. Father Faber. Price 3s.

922-s
M 52

AUTHOR

Modern Saints: Life of

TITLE Saint Jane Frances De Chantal.

DATE